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THE POLITICS OF DEATH: JEAN PAUL MARAT

by
Joseph Paul Wallace

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2008

Approved by

_____
Advisor: Professor Marc Lerner

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_____
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I would like to dedicate this work to my teachers, mentors, and parents. Thanks to Jeannie Tice, Carla Falkner, Mark Bhoeler, Stephen Wallace, and Gina Wallace. Without their encouragement and guidance, I would never have gone to college.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Marc Lerner, for helping me to revise draft after draft of this thesis. Also, Dr. John Neff's advice on whom to read for authorities of historical memory allowed me to think beyond the *politics of death* and to understand the social factors at work in the Cult of Marat. In addition, I am indebted to all of the scholars of the French Revolution cited here. Without the context of their extensive works, a work like my own would be impossible to read, write, or understand.

ABSTRACT
JOSEPH PAUL WALLACE: The Politics of Death: Jean-Paul Marat
(Under the direction of Marc Lerner)

The following thesis discusses the death and quasi-deification of Jean-Paul Marat, politician and journalist of the French Revolution. I focus on the tensions between social, artistic, and political movements that sprung up in the wake of the radical's martyrdom. I also demonstrate the drastic change in general attitudes and policies—political, social and artistic—toward Marat between the years of the Terror and Thermidor. I hope to prove that Marat, in transcending his own policies and words after death by becoming a visual and tactile symbol representing both social justice and political terror, is a pivotal figure for the French Revolution.

For secondary sources, my research included histories of the French Revolution, biographies of Marat, theoretical texts on historical memory, and art history texts. I used primary sources in the form of English translation of French newspapers and speeches. My primary sources also included original artworks.

My research indicated that Marat proved emblematic of the cults of civil religions during the French Revolution. Because the Cult of Marat was in some ways both a popular movement and an official propaganda campaign, the study of this unique case demonstrates the nexus between French radicals in the government and among those among Parisian rabble. Yet the study of the Cult of Marat also shows the tensions between popular radicals and their counterparts in the National Convention.

From my study of the Cult of Marat, I discovered that the Jacobin line was generally one of ambivalence toward popular movements. The figures of Maximillien Robespierre and Jacques-Louis David demonstrate this complex relationship of the members of the Jacobin Club and the National Convention toward the crowds of Paris radicals. While Robespierre wanted to suppress the Cult of Marat, David nurtured the movement and orchestrated much of its propaganda. Outside Jacobin circles, there was an even greater gulf of opinion. This development is best seen by the shift in attitudes toward Marat following the moderate reaction of Thermidor. Using the theoretical framework of historical memory, I was able to explain the creation and destruction of the Cult of Marat as a social phenomenon as much as a political phenomenon.

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INTRODUCTION

> *What has become of that ugliness that Death has so swiftly erased with the tip of its wing? Marat can henceforth challenge Apollo; Death has kissed him with loving lips and he rests in the peace of his transformation.*[1]
> –Charles Baudelaire on David's *Marat Assassinated*

While Baudelaire was merely applauding the artistic genius of Jacques-Louis David when he made this comment in the 1840s,[2] his statement also encapsulates the relationship of Marat's political life with the cult of his death. Jean-Paul Marat created a political following by calling for the deaths of others, but he unwittingly created a cult of radical patriotism through his own death. Louis Gottschalk suggests that because of the death and symbolic resurrection of Marat being inextricably linked to events of the French Revolution, Marat and the Revolution "made" one another.[3] To what extent was the Revolution after Marat made in his image? To what extent was it just his image, rather than his ideas, that lived on?

The following thesis explores the relationship between Marat and the social, political and artistic movements of the Terror that followed his death. In Chapter 1, I find it necessary to first explain Marat's political development. Tracing this development demonstrates that charges of Marat lacking capacity for abstract theorizing are unfounded. Then, I provide a description of Marat's assassination, which proves necessary to understand much of the art and propaganda following his death. In Chapter

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[1] Charles Baudelaire quoted in "introduction" in *Jacques-Louis David's Marat,* William Vaughn and Helen Weston, eds., (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 1.
[2] Vaughn and Weston, eds., "introduction" in *David's Marat,* 1-2.
[3] Louis R. Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat: A Study in Radicalism* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 34.

2, I detail the popular movement of the Cult of Marat, and then I discuss the literary and artistic glorifications of Marat. Then, in Chapter 3, I draw the connections between Marat's own political ideas and those instituted before and during the Terror. To better understand the relationship between Marat and the Terror, I also show how tenuous the relationship was between the Jacobin leaders and the popular movements for which Marat was the inspiration. Moreover, I explore what motivated the Jacobins to adapt Marat as a national hero in the first place. After the Terror, I briefly discuss the second death of Marat—how his image and ideas were demolished following the 9th of Thermidor and the fall of Robespierre.

Throughout Chapters 2 and 3, after the brief section on the death of Marat, I frame the developments of the Cult of Marat using the concept of historical memory. The sociological frame of collective memory helps to explain the political, social, and artistic commemorations of Marat. Without understanding the forces of collective memory, the history of the Cult of Marat either twists itself into knots like a popular force without reason and without pattern, or it lies dead and false like a static manipulation from the government forces above. Both popular forces of spontaneous commemoration and elite forces of top-down propaganda contributed to the life and energy of the Cult of Marat, but collective memory envelops both forces as the primary drive behind the development, the patterns, and the myths of the Cult of Marat. Pierre Nora wrote that the collective national history of France was a "sacred history." Just like the Catholic catechism that much of the collective memory sought to replace, the collective national history was holy because of the myths emphasizing the sacrifice of one's life to the

patrie.[4] The Cult of Marat and what I call the Terror's *politics of death*[5] represent this quasi-religious collective memory in France in a concentrated and intense time frame. The cult, then, can also be thought of as a case study for validating theories of collective memory, particularly the development of religious collective memory. In Chapter 3, I detail how the development of the Cult of Marat fluctuated between a dangerous political heresy and a useful mystical movement for the Jacobin orthodoxy.

The overall organization of my thesis is somewhat chronological, considering that the thesis pivots on Marat's death with life on one side and legacy on the other. Despite the overall chronological organization, more thematic sections like those on the artistic movements in Chapter 2 might tend to "slow down" the thesis or to distract the reader with the change of pace. Yet I hope to justify in depth for what might otherwise hurt the pace of the writing. I refer back to Marat's life in discussing his cult-hood in Chapter 3, which might sometimes feel circular. Yet I hope to prove two points by following this circular organization. First, the events of Marat's life and later cult-hood offer a distinctly appropriate trajectory of attitudes within the context of the French Revolution. Marat's struggles and triumphs in life continue in the form of his cult after death, and the attitudes toward his legacy ultimately reflect the struggles, triumphs, and downfalls of the radical cause during the Revolution.

For Marat to become an established national hero after death is truly significant, considering how much his cult's official ceremonies contrasted with his self-inflicted subterranean life of exile and masochistic struggles against authority. It is impossible to

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[4] Pierre Nora, ed., *Rethinking France*, trans., Mary Trouille (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), XIV.

[5] Even before Marat died, the motto of the Jacobins who initiated the Terror was "Freedom or Death." See Philippe Lebas, Letter to Father, 1793 January 21, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, trans., ed., Aeleanor Taylor (London: H. Cattell and Co., 1882), 122.

understand the significance of Marat's national sainthood without discussing his political life in which he seemed so determined in living to die another day, as his dogged martyr mentality ironically pushed him at many times to live as much as to die during his life. To merely note Marat's transition from pariah to hero, however, is not enough. I find it necessary to show that the Cult of Marat was oftentimes more of a convenient ingredient to the bourgeoning mythology of the Revolution, rather than a movement actually glorifying its object or unwitting founder. For this reason, in Chapter 3, I revert to the question of what Marat would think of his own legacy. To compare Marat's life and ideas to the Cult of Marat's propaganda is helpful to understanding the tension among radicals during the Revolution. The conflict between popular and professional radicalism proved to be a major theme in my research. Aside from greater understanding of the significance and ironies of Marat's life and death trajectories, and the inherent unity of attitudes toward Marat's legacy and the direction of the Revolution, I ultimately decided upon the looping organization of the thesis because showing the various strands of radicalism through powerful ironies and tensions of a cult-hood founded upon a figure so controversial—even within Jacobin circles—is an aspect of the Terror that is neglected by historians. Too often historians write Marat off as either a raving madman or the father of the Terror. Both are myths I hope to disprove, and I find the circular organization of my thesis the most effective way of demonstrating that Marat was not the father of the Terror.

I will show to what extent the Terror honored the espoused policies of Marat, the official "martyr-sovereign of the republic."[6] While one observer of the Revolution

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[6] Marie-Hélène Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution: The Staging of Marat's Death, 1793-1797* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 64.

claimed Marat to be the "father of all the horrors which followed his horrible reign,"[7] the causal link is not as strong as suggested. The Jacobins, particularly Robespierre, regarded Marat with fear and jealousy, seeking to control the Cult of Marat after his death. While some of the programs implemented after Marat's death prove consistent with the ideas he espoused in life, he actually remained a symbol to exploit more than a doctrine to be followed. Nevertheless, there was theoretical substance behind the lightning flashes of Marat's vengeful rhetoric. I hope, therefore, to dispel two popular myths: first, that Marat lacked a real political program; and second, that a causal link exists between his writings and the later policies of the Terror. If the historiography of infamous characters is akin to a trial by jury, I find that Marat is not guilty of the Terror based upon a lack of direct causality.

[7] Stanley Loomis, *Paris in the Terror: June 1793-July 1794* (Philadelphia & New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1964), 84.

CHAPTER 1

Philosophical Influences and Political Development

> *In all stages of man's life, the mind wills and soon it wills no more. It loves, and soon its love changes into hatred. It approves what soon it condemns.* [8]
> –The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

The character of the hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters* foreshadows Marat's own personal development. The hermit, a former courtier, grows proud of his status and accomplishments, but then he falls out of favor with society, loses his inheritance and transforms into a bitter recluse.[9] Likewise, Marat had been a Doctor of the Body-Guard to the Count of Artois—King Louis XVI's brother. In addition to his work as a royal physician, Marat enjoyed some limited success as a scientist. Yet his poor background and his failure to secure a seat with the Academy of Sciences helped propel him down a more radical track. In the case of the scientific community, Marat felt his contemporaries unjustly persecuted his work. Marat was so dogmatic that he failed to take into account genuine differences of opinion, always expecting criticisms or rejections of his work to be the workings of ulterior motives. The logical conclusion of such a mindset was that Marat saw himself as a martyr for his honor and (his idea of) truth, even before the perceived conspiracies of the French Revolution.[10] As Marat's life followed a track that

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[8] Jean-Paul Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, intro., trans., Bibliophile Society (Boston & NY: Bibliophile Society, Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1905 & 1971), 40.
[9] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 16.
[10] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 9, 24-26.

took him to paranoid radicalism, the words of Kamia—the protagonist of *Polish Letters*—prove prescient when we substitute Marat himself for what Kamia says of the hermit: "What astonishes me is that the more he appears to be logical, the more his conclusions seem to be heretical."[11] Kamia eventually rejects the hermit's teachings in favor of a sage who advises, "Be obedient to the laws of your country."[12] Yet Marat, unlike his protagonist, ultimately chose the way of the radical hermit over the way of the conformist, socialite sage.

Marat's political beliefs are impossible to disentangle from his biography, which is likewise impossible to separate from the historical developments of his time. Neither French nor British, the Swiss-born Marat nevertheless expatriated to France and Britain and found himself deeply entangled in the conflict of these countries. While Marat would eventually seek to change the fate of both France and Great Britain, the incidents he witnessed in both countries changed profoundly his political philosophy. Without a static, consistent political philosophy, then, one must focus on Marat's political development rather than a unified political program to compare to the policies instituted in his name after his death.

Marat claimed to owe his political coming-of-age to the Wilkes controversy, which took place in Great Britain's House of Commons in the 1760s. John Wilkes won a seat in an election, but the House of Commons repeatedly refused Wilkes's claim to a seat.[13] Despite Marat's indignation and violent language in *Chains of Slavery*, in which he addressed the British, he preached not revolution but vigilance at this time. "The

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[11] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 153.
[12] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 199.
[13] Stephen Miller, *Three Deaths and Enlightenment Thought* (Lewisburg, Pa: Bucknell University Press, 2001), 131, 13.

greatest misfortune... to a free state, where the Prince is powerful and clever, is to not have public discussions, rallies and groups... Liberty continually arises out of the fires of sedition," he stated.[14] The argument for sedition as a patriotic duty, however, proves ironic when one considers how intolerant Marat becomes during the Revolution when he suspects one of disloyalty by his own standards. While the above statement seems to contradict later Jacobin Terror policies carried on in the name of Marat, the truth is that the statement also contradicts later actions by Marat himself. His claim that sedition is a healthy force in society directly conflicts with his later arguments for the execution of traitors. Beyond the problem of consistency, Marat's development also shows a problem of discontinuity and apparent apathy. Although the Wilkes controversy supposedly represented Marat's political awakening, upon returning to Paris from London he devoted himself to an apolitical career of science for twelve years before the French Revolution. Marat is guilty of not only political discontinuity but also social discontinuity, because during the same decade-long respite, Marat—a future "Friend of the People"—continued to frequent the most aristocratic salons of France.[15] The difference of company and manners is significant, for by the end of Marat's life he certainly did not frequent aristocratic salons wearing his trademark bonnet of the sans-culottes.[16]

The Roots of Radicalism

> *To work is man's indispensable duty, and every lazy man who eats in idleness the bread gained by the work of another is a felon... [T]he earth has been given to all men in common; the rights of all to the whole are equal... As long as the fruits of the soil are sufficient to support the inhabitants, each man has a right to the*

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[14] Marat quoted in Miller, *Three Deaths*, 132-133.
[15] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 134, 147.
[16] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters,* by Jean-Paul Marat (Boston & NY: Bibliophile Society, Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1905 & 1971), 52.

> *portion of land necessary for his sustenance... No form of government... is legitimate except that in which the people, as a body, have sovereignty.*[17]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

For Marat, the transformation from a moderate to a revolutionary began before the revolution. Reading and interpreting Montesquieu and Rousseau sowed within Marat "seeds of discontent" regarding the nature of laws.[18]

Chains of Slavery (written 1774) presents perhaps the best available indication of Marat's ideas before 1789. At the time Marat penned *Chains of Slavery*, he was a reserved moderate rather than a radical extremist. Nevertheless, the text proves that he already trusted in the sovereignty of the people, and that the term sovereign fit the role of the people and not the monarch. However, he argued for the people as sovereign to act through their representatives. From the belief in the sovereignty of the people, Marat saw a need to sympathize with the least among the people—the poor and incapacitated members of society.[19]

In 1780, Marat published *Plan de législation ciminelle*, a work that took his newfound affinity for the lower classes to an extreme. In this work, he argued that the poor cannot be held responsible for obeying the laws of a society in which they derive no advantages. Furthermore, the poor might legitimately gain their rights of nature by force or violence—anyone countering their force being guilty of tyranny. Marat concluded the argument in favor of redistributing wealth at the expense of the Church and the leisure class in particular. He favored setting up free schools for the public at the expense of the aristocracy and also argued that the clergy should sacrifice ecclesiastical property for the benefit of the poor. The redistribution of Church wealth was supposedly just as

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[17] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 61-62, 128.
[18] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 15-16.
[19] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 20-21.

necessary for the clergy's welfare, as a more austere lifestyle would allow them to live a life of proper example. Despite pushing for reforms that favored the poor, Marat failed to extend his sympathies to peasants. He had been an urban-dweller his whole life. As Gottschalk points out, once Marat stopped being a bourgeois leader as a successful physician, he turned to the urban working-class during the Revolution—a shift in altitude from top to bottom, but not a move in latitude from urban to rural.[20]

Marat's *Offrande á la Patrie*, published in 1789, demonstrates the extent to which he read and absorbed Montesquieu. In the work, which Marat wrote for a French audience before the elections for the Estates General, he suggested a separation of powers be implemented to check the power of the monarch, along with a declaration for the rights of man, including the right to a free press, habeas corpus, and tax in proportion to wealth. Moreover, in the work, he favored the Estates General voting by head in a single body, thus solidifying concretely his support for the sovereignty of the Third Estate. His belief in popular sovereignty was, however, moderated in his continued support for the executive role of the king; for example, he favored the right of King Louis XVI to veto laws.[21] Marat's hesitation to abandon support of executive powers as significant as the veto demonstrates his continued moderation on the eve of the Revolution. Nevertheless, Will Vaughn and Helen Weston cite this February 1789 work as a turning point in Marat's career. From that moment forward, Marat thought of himself as champion of the freedom of the press and popular causes in general.[22] Yet his politics continued to shift in a more radical direction.

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[20] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 23, 32-33.
[21] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 8. Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 37-38, 41.
[22] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 8.

By August of 1789, as evident in *La Constitution ou Projet de declaration des Droits de l' home et du citoyen, suivi d' un Plan de constitution juste, sage et libre,* Marat claimed the army's allegiance first lies with the people, not the king. By this time, he also argued that the royal veto should be a mere formality. In further separating powers with a check on the king, Marat favored municipal nominations of judges, seeking to make it impossible for monarchs to abuse their power. Still, Marat hedged and vacillated in the work. He wanted to check royal power yet would allow the king to appoint ministers and issue administrative ordinances. His views on property also proved inconsistent, as he advocated that private property be included as a civil liberty while still arguing for the redistribution of wealth. In addition, like many popular suffragists of his day, he suggested the birthright of voting should exclude women and children. While his philosophy became more radical in 1789, he was not yet overtly violent (though he was apologetic for the poor who resorted to violence) and he still advocated top-down reforms through an enlightened monarch.[23]

A second sort of political awakening after the Wilkes controversy occurred for Marat at the beginning of the French Revolution. By his own account, Marat "lay on [his] deathbed" when a friend told him of the convocation of the Estates General. Then, Marat stated, "my illness suddenly broke and my spirits revived."[24] That was not the first time Marat linked his personal health to his professional opportunities, for Marat suggested the acclaim of his political work, *Offrande á la Patrie*, already saved his life

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[23] Marat, *La Constitution ou Projet de declaration des Droits de l' home et du citoyen, suivi d' un Plan de constitution juste, sage et libre*, 1789, quoted in Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 46-49. The first issues of *L'Ami du Peuple* advocated a similar line.

[24] Marat quoted in *Three Deaths*, Miller, 147.

once in 1789.[25] The Revolution offered Marat the opportunity to vent his pent-up drive for glory, which he perceived to have been blocked by the academic community many times.[26]

The Politics of Violence

> *[Man] can, where his welfare is concerned, turn the sword against the bosom that bore him, cut his father in pieces, devour the still quivering flesh of his fellows, and, if necessary, shed the blood of the whole human race.*[27]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

The hermit's statement comes to us in the context of a story written by Marat in which the character of the hermit is proven wrong by a sage. Despite this, Marat himself eventually accepted similar notions of justified violence when one's subsistence is at stake. Eli Sagan suggests a distinction between Marat, a "born terrorist," and others arriving "at terrorist-extreme paranoid position as a result of the increasing anxiety-panic caused by revolutionary events and the failure to resolve and stabilize the political position."[28] Sagan backs up this argument by pointing out that at the very beginning of the Revolution in 1789, Marat already demanded the heads of traitors.[29] But to suggest that Marat was always a terrorist overlooks his past when he was quite comfortable socializing with aristocrats and royalists. Rather than 1789 terroristic statements proving Marat's static adherence to violent radicalism, the statements reinforce the idea that Marat's character and politics evolved as a result of events. Moreover, Marat's eventual

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[25] Jean-Paul Marat, "Jean Paul Marat, Friend of the People," *Journal de la République, No. XCVIII,* 1793 January, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 71.
[26] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 31.
[27] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 94.
[28] Eli Sagan, *Citizens & Cannibals: The French Revolution, The Struggle for Modernity, And The Origins of Ideological Terror* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 360.
[29] Sagan, *Citizens & Cannibals*, 348.

acceptance of state terror is more complex than Sagan implies. Marat believed violence was justified as a means to peace, liberty, and equality—but never as an end in itself. Rather than setting Marat apart as a "born terrorist," the full texts of his arguments for execution of traitors come across more in the tradition of Thomas Paine than as the diatribes of a terrorist. Perhaps most historians simply reject Marat's justifications for violence, but the absence of their explicit rejection makes that notion presumptuous. Most historians simply do not discuss Marat's justifications at all. Whether or not historians know about Marat's rationales for violence, it seems they do not explain his calls for mass executions because he makes too useful a pedagogical foil and too interesting a character in two-dimensional madman form.

It is not enough to suggest that Marat evolved to become a radical proponent of violence. One must also consider Marat's agitation for violence in context. While much of Marat's infamy resulted from his violent language, his rationales receive little space in histories written about the French Revolution. Marat's cries for violence are often portrayed as bloodlust—and certainly his language alone would seem to indicate this is true. Yet Marat also sought to make a logical argument for the effectiveness of limited violence and terror. For instance, Marat stated, "No one abhors bloodshed more than I," but to avoid "the necessity of shedding an ounce of blood, I warmly beseech you to shed a few drips of it," so that society can "reconcile the duties of humanity with your solicitude for the public welfare."[30] Put another way, "The cutting off of five or six hundred heads would have guaranteed your peace, liberty and happiness," but "mistaken humanity has crippled your arms and held back your blows," which "will cost the lives of

[30] Jean-Paul Marat, "The Friend of the People to the French Patriots," *L'Ami du Peuple*, 1792 August, in *Writings of Jean-Paul Marat, With a Biographical Sketch. Voices of Revolt* Volume II, ed., trans., Paul Friedlander (U.S.A.: International Publishers, Inc., 1927), 47.

millions of your brothers."[31] In August of 1792, Marat suggested killing one in ten traitors within the National Assembly, presumably to make examples and scare the rest into a straight line.[32]

Marat sought to justify state terror not just in quantitative lives saved but also in what he suggested would be the quality of lives saved. He coupled a somewhat warped sense of compassion with his calls for violence. The "enemies need only to triumph for a moment" for blood to "flow in torrents," Marat stated, because "they will rip open the bellies of your wives, and in order to choke within you the love of liberty, their bloody hands will explore the entrails of your children to find their hearts."[33] One could argue that Marat seeks to project such violent imagery upon his enemies in order to rationalize any and all methods of eliminating them, but his arguments for cutting off heads to avoid "the horrors of civil war" [34] in spite of his aversion to war in general demonstrate that Marat is more complex than many biographers and historians might suggest. He is not violent for violence's sake, as he frowns upon war of every sort. Although an argument can be made that Marat disliked war because its burdens fell primarily to the poor, his aversion to both civil and foreign war nevertheless suggests that bloodshed is never an end goal—as some historians suggest—but always a means to a goal of liberty or equality.

Much of Marat's infamy resulted from his violent language, which eventually became his trademark, the source of his influence, and the reason for his monstrous

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[31] Jean-Paul Marat, "Are We Undone," *L'Ami du Peuple*, 1790 July 26, in *Writings of Marat,* 35, 36.
[32] Marat, "The Friend of the People to the French Patriots," in *Writings of Marat*, 47.
[33] Marat, "Are We Undone?," *Writings of Marat*, 35-36.
[34] Jean-Paul Marat, "Marat to Desmoulins," 1790 August, in *Writings of Marat*, 74.

legacy. Nowhere is Marat's language more violent than in the journal he published during the Revolution. Marat began publishing *L'Ami du Peuple* (originally *Le Publiciste*) in September of 1789, warning from the very first issues of his desire to reveal traitors and conspiracies.[35] He founded the journal because he felt the National Assembly should be monitored on behalf of the people. Rather than a newspaper, Marat's journal functioned more as an editorial page. In the first issues of the journal, Marat still argued for a substantial role for the monarch—in the areas of conduct of war, foreign affairs and finance. In these early issues, Marat wrote of the Revolution primarily from a moderate reformist perspective, not yet understanding it as a movement of popular radicalism. Some explain his later shift to radicalism as his growing anxiety at witnessing the smooth trajectory of the Revolution disrupted by the incompetence of moderate leadership.[36]

After some initial hope expressed for the future of the Revolution in the first numbers of the journal, Marat stopped in his moderate tracks and shifted into a paranoid radical gear—suspecting and censuring anyone who opposed his policies. Around the time of the "October Days" in 1789, Marat suspected a counterrevolutionary plot on the basis of troop movements from the Versailles palace—and was one of the first to then arouse public attention and action against the court-party. The next several issues of the journal attacked various enemies—Necker, the Châtelet police force, the Paris Commune, Lafayette, Bailly, and Mirabeau—but for the purposes of this paper, no substantial shift of political philosophy occurred during the time of Marat's first journals and his flight to Britain to escape the Châtelet's persecution in early 1790. In the summer of 1790, a

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[35] Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, September 1789, cited in Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 9.
[36] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 49, 50, 51, 54.

substantial shift did occur, which was to characterize all of Marat's writings from that point forward. Marat's overt calls for violence against treacherous "hordes" in July represent a major shift from his past arguments simply excusing violence. Marat continued to justify his violence through rationales he considered humane, patriotic, and reasonable. Yet this rhetorical shift to explicit calls for violence, not any political ideology or substantive policies, proved to be Marat's greatest source of influence during the Revolution.[37]

Marat Attacks the Monarchy

> *The more I reflect on the powerful influence exerted by the monarch on the minds of his subjects, the more am I convinced that he has not their welfare at heart, and that, instead of desiring to see himself imitated as a god, he would rather have the pleasure of exercising his authority as a master.*[38]
> —Kamia in Marat's *Polish Letters*

After the naval mutiny's suppression in Nancy in August 1790, Marat finally criticized the king directly, stating that Louis XVI was tainted by the bloodshed of patriots at Nancy.[39] Marat stood on the side of the soldiers as opposed to the officers in the Nancy incident. He followed a democratic line when it came to the military in general and was essentially a pacifist when it came to wars, opposing a standing army except inasmuch as it was composed of citizens (active and passive) and remained under the control of the people. But Marat's attack on the king after the Nancy affair showed a major shift in Marat's attitude, as he had praised monarchy in practice and principle his whole life up to that point.[40] In 1789, he had published *Offrande á la Patrie*, which declared Louis XVI to be a good enough king and lauded "his love for his people, his

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[37] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat* 56, 58-64, 69, 173.
[38] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol I, 118.
[39] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 151.
[40] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 70, 82, 14.

zeal for the public welfare."[41] After he continued to make such royalist statements throughout the first year of the Revolution, one can understand the significance of the shift in the summer of 1790. Not long after the Nancy affair, Marat began to associate everything royal with counterrevolution and conspiracies. On November 8, 1790, Marat stated that he believed in the inherent evil of hereditary monarchy. Then, after the King's flight in July of 1791, Marat demanded the trial, imprisonment and execution of the monarch.[42]

Despite the denunciation of the king, Marat continued to shun the idea of a democratic republic, however, because he felt it would fall apart and lead to oligarchy.[43] Instead, on November 12, he suggested the legislature proscribe the monarch's power and concentrate authority into the hands of a council, which was similar to the future Directory of 1795-1799. Even on the eve of the National Convention's proclamation of the First Republic, Marat remained a monarchist who had yet to formulate a new ideal of a monarch beyond the hereditary monarchy he disavowed. He never endorsed explicitly the idea of a republic in France until the king was executed.[44] Yet, in the last year of his life, he also began to call explicitly for the appointment of a temporary dictatorship. In a January 1793 speech that was published but never delivered in the convention, one can grasp Marat's looming transition from a monarchist to a republican and possibly even some sense of his forthcoming concept of a dictatorship:

> There was never a contract between the people and their agents, although there was a binding one between the sovereign and its members. A nation which

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[41] Marat, *Offrande á la Patrie*, quoted in Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 37.
[42] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 73, 77.
[43] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 151.
[44] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 73-74, 98, 131.

delegates its powers to agents does not contract with them; it assigns them some function in the general interest.[45]

After the Revolution transformed into a social upheaval in 1792, Marat rose to new heights in fame, infamy, respect, and fear. Marat was partly responsible for the insurrection and fall of the monarchy on August 10, 1792, because he had urged the people to take the royal family hostage and demand due justice. He clamored for the royalist traitors' executions, not for revenge, Marat argued, but for the good of society. Because Marat believed French people too stupid for a republic and the monarchy proved too corrupt, Marat eventually demanded an alternative solution—a dictatorship. He favored a dictatorship because he felt the people needed help to consolidate their gains and guide them through the Revolution. Yet he felt the dictatorship should be limited and temporary—simply used to destroy enemies and carry the Revolution forward to its end and a renewed stability. Marat agitated for a dictatorship even as he sat as an elected deputy to the sessions of the National Convention beginning on September 20, 1792.[46]

Stanley Loomis claims that Marat had no inclination to become a dictator himself.[47] Yet Gottschalk concludes that becoming dictator is exactly what Marat had in mind, as on July 26, 1790, he had written a list of what he would do as tribune—acts bold enough to fit a dictator as much as a tribune. Later, in November, 1790, Marat stated his explicit hope that the people should have "a tribune who had the soul of their Friend."[48] He also published letters from readers in his journal encouraging the editor (himself) to become dictator. Marat renounced belief in a dictatorship when it became politically

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[45] Marat, *On the Execution of the King*, reprinted in *Regicide and Revolution; Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, Michael Walzer, ed., intro., trans., Marian Rothstein (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 159.
[46] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 105, 96, 107, 109, 113-114.
[47] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 94.
[48] Marat, November 1789, quoted in Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 116-117.

expedient to do so with the founding of the First Republic, but he found substitutes for his dictatorship in the Committees of General Security and Public Safety, which emerged during the crises of the spring of 1793. Throughout his political evolution, Marat always maintained the need for a strong executive.[49]

Trial and Triumph Against the Girondins

> *The constitution of your country is very faulty; it is a remnant of barbarism which shames humanity. When the people are groaning under so hard a yoke, how very fortunate for them to get a good and honorable prince!*[50]
> —The sage in Marat's *Polish Letters*

Because Marat favored a dictatorship to eliminate internal conspirators, he welcomed the establishment of a Revolutionary Tribunal, but within a month of its creation he stood before the judicial body—charged by the Girondins with sedition.[51] On September 25, 1792, the Girondins—a party of federalists in opposition to the Jacobins—cited Marat's own newspaper as proof of his guilt of crimes ranging from inciting a new insurrection to calls for a dictatorship.[52] Marat appeared to welcome the charges of sedition out of the need to feel persecuted. Marat possessed the singular and perverse characteristic of always hoping to become a martyr. A salient characteristic of Marat was an expectation for unfair treatment.[53] He himself demanded a trial take place.[54] During his trial, he told the tribunal, "Citizens, this is not a guilty person you see before you; it is the apostle and martyr of liberty."[55] Marat justified his calls to dictatorship on the grounds that the bloodiest uprisings could be averted if the people had been "directed by skilful hands" that would wield the axe more discriminately. He suggested the "terrible"

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[49] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 117, 133.
[50] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 211.
[51] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 124.
[52] Sagan, *Citizens and Cannibals*, 124.
[53] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 25.
[54] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 63.
[55] Marat quoted in Miller, *Three Deaths*, 124.

and "unruly" aspects of famous uprisings such as those on July 14, October 6, August 10, and September 2 could have been avoided if the movements had been orchestrated by a chief to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.[56] An uproar amongst the deputies led Marat to dramatically pull a pistol and aim it to his own head, assuring the deputies he would commit suicide if the indictment was decreed, for he felt he had undergone three years of persecution, hiding, and suffering only to go completely unappreciated.[57] He defended himself by blaming the accusations upon a Girondin conspiracy, and the Tribunal ruled for Marat based upon this conspiracy theory. Once acquitted, a crowd swarmed around Marat, threw flowers at him and hung garlands around his chair.[58] Marat stated that "many civic crowns were put on my head." Thus crowned, Marat demonstrates the symmetry between power and martyrdom in his psyche—Marat earns the crown upon his head by first pointing a pistol there. Marat recounted the glory of the experience,

> The municipal officers, the native guards, the canoniers, the gendarmes, the hussars who surrounded me, fearing lest I should be crushed in the press [of the crowd], formed two lines and took me into their midst. They walked at the head of the grand staircase in order that citizens might better see me. Outside the court, from the palace to the convention, the streets and the bridges were covered with an innumerable throng crying at the top of their voices and without intermission: 'Vive la Republique! Vive la Liberte! Vive Marat!'[59]

The image of Marat after his trial and triumph, as a regal or divine figure redeemed by his people, followed him for the rest of his life and beyond his death. Wittingly or not, in crowning Marat after his acquittal, his admirers exploited the links between God and King, which already existed in French history. Anne-Marie Lecoq explains that kings exhibited "signs of power" with divine antecedents such as scepters,

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[56] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 63.
[57] Sagan, *Citizens and Cannibals*, 124.
[58] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 160; Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 62-63.
[59] Marat quoted in Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 67-68.

crowns, and coronation ceremonies. Lecoq's description of a king's entrance into a city bears great resemblance to Marat's spontaneous procession in Paris following his trial. Shaded under a canopy, the King would be physically raised up to the same level during the procession as the city's churches. As he passed through crowds, the street below would have resembled the decorations in a Corpus Christi procession. Lecoq suggests a link between French Kings' entrances and the traditional Epiphany of Christ, as people oftentimes shouted "Noël" at the King's entrance. The idea that Marat, "Friend of the People," was benefitting from subconscious royal and religious traditions is not at all farfetched. Lecoq shows that the French viewed modern history as mere reflections and repetitions of the past. Most every act, the French believed, repeated or reflected the archetypal act that already happened in a more exemplary way. The kings' or heroes' greatest glory lay in resurrecting the memory of one or several archetypes from the reservoir of symbolic figures in biblical, ancient, or early national history.[60] Three examples of popular symbols reincarnated during the Revolution included a Masonic level symbolizing equality, the Roman/Gallic laurel as a sign of civic virtue, and the Egyptian eye as an emblem of vigilance.[61] The Cult of Marat, as I will demonstrate, benefitted from a wealth of such ancient symbols—both Christian and Pagan.

Not only artists but average citizens compared Marat to both Christ and Brutus on a number of occasions during his lifetime and even more after his death. While matching Christ in the spirit of his death and perhaps Agamemnon in the details of his death

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[60] Anne-Marie Lecoq, "The Symbolism of the State: The Images of the Monarchy from the Early Valois Kings to Louis XVI," in *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Volume I: *The State*). ed., Pierre Nora, trans., Mary Trouille (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 217, 219, 247.

[61] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 60.

(Agamemnon was also deceived and murdered by a woman while bathing), it was Lucius Junius Brutus—who overthrew the last Roman King Lucius Tarquinius Superbus—that contemporaries claimed was most compatible to Marat during his life. Brutus was Tarquin's nephew. After committing regicide and usurping the throne, Tarquin grew paranoid and murdered Brutus's entire family, but he spared Brutus because he had feigned stupidity and did not seem worth killing. As a doctor, Marat also had ties to the court he would one day shun. The connection is never made in any of the works that discuss the cults of Brutus and Marat, but it seems Marat's courtly background and his frequent outsmarting and escaping tyranny and persecution seemed to link him to the legend of Brutus—a figure already popularized by Voltaire's play and David's 1789 painting. Marat's trial was just another example of his making a strategic move to survive, just as Brutus had cunningly feigned brutishness.

One could take the parallels between Brutus and Marat even further. Brutus finally turned on his king when Tarquin's son, Sextus, raped Lucretia. When Lucretia stabbed herself, Brutus pulled the knife from her flesh and vowed on Lucretia's blood that he would avenge her death by expelling the royal Tarquins and abolishing the very institution of monarchy. I believe contemporaries could have compared Marat to Brutus because he too had his Lucretia moment with the Nancy incident. Marat turned on the king for allowing the naval mutiny to be violently suppressed. After the Nancy incident, as with Lucretia's death for Brutus, Marat worked to end the hereditary monarchy he considered to be an evil institution.

The third way in which Marat compares to Brutus is the outspoken republican rhetoric of sacrifice, always urging the priority of public interests over private. Just as

Brutus had his own sons executed for treachery and royalist conspiracy, Marat demanded the heads of many fellow revolutionaries and convention deputies who he, too, considered traitors like Brutus's sons.[62] The Girondists were just as much sons or fathers of the revolution as the Mountain had been, but Marat felt their execution was necessary for the good of the *patrie*.

Essentially, while many figures sought and received comparisons to Brutus, Marat's life truly mirrored key aspects of Brutus's. Marat owed much of his posthumous popularity to the groundwork of propaganda already laid in glorifying a figure like Brutus—an idea I explore more in Chapter 2. Before the Cult of Marat glorified its object in the same terms the Revolution used to glorify Brutus, the trial shows how Marat was also able to succeed in propaganda coups during his lifetime. The triumph following Marat's trial was indicative of how Marat was at key moments in the Revolution esteemed as a hero of the people who had overthrown a tyrant, instead of being viewed as a regicidal rabble rouser who had been exiled many times for his treacheries—the memory he would be exiled to for many subsequent generations after the Terror.

The trial presents us with one of the many trajectories indicative of Marat's life and career as a whole—a pattern of perceived or real persecution, followed by claims of patriotism and offers for self-sacrifice, his turning the accusations against his enemies, and finally martyrdom, secular sainthood, and vindication. The exoneration had the effect of making Marat seem beyond the law, a saintly transcendence his death was to further increase.[63] With saint-like impunity, he continued his seditious writings. Under the headline of "GUARD AGAINST PROFITEERS," in the February 25, 1793 edition of

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[62] Robert L. Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus," and the French Revoltuion: an essay in art and politics*, Art in Context series (London: Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1972), 16.

[63] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 63.

Journal of the French Republic, Marat declared, "A little patience, and the people will finally recognize the truth that it must free itself" from the "props of the old regime."[64] Additionally, the trial poses another central question of to what extent the later Cult of Marat was fueled from the bottom up. Marat suggested that in the celebration following his acquittal, "Numberless spectators at the casements kept up the applause; the most aristocratic were forced to follow this example."[65] In the flow of the applause from the bottom up, the energy current of the Cult of Marat is also foreshadowed. While the elite would try and contain and control the Cult of Marat, they were nevertheless forced to make concessions to the crowd—just as they felt the pressure to clap and cheer after the trial.

Marat on Vigilance, Distrust and the Rights of Man

> *Wretched man, before even feeling his misery, the horrible image of his torments, always present to his mind, unceasingly troubles his repose and poisons his life. He cannot calm his trouble; it agitates him by night and gives him no peace by day. His imagination adds to his terrors and embitters his eternal misery.*[66]
> —The sage speaking of the hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

Despite having been accused of treachery himself, Marat never wavered on at least one issue—the necessary execution of those whom he saw as false patriots. Marat held a Manichean conception of liberty and patriotism, which caused him to demonize everyone of a different opinion. He could persuade himself of his status as a patriot of honor only by calling out the false patriotism of others. He stated that, "given the impossibility of changing their hearts I see the total destruction of that accursed race [of capitalists, speculators, monopolists, and luxury merchants] as the only way to establish

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[64] Jean Paul Marat, "GUARD AGAINST PROFITEERS," *Journal de la République,* 1793 February 25, in *Writings of Marat,* 58-60.
[65] Marat quoted in "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, Bibliophile Society, 68.
[66] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 185.

tranquility in the state."[67] As Marat changed his mind on issues and policies over time, he remained always suspicious of others' opinions (even when they were opinions he himself shared before). One could speculate, moreover, that perhaps Marat was not so much interested in the form of the state as the nature of the state, for while the best possible form of the state might change with the demands of the situation, the nature of the state must always be a vigilant community. He believed in vigilance to the end—always in the name of the *patrie*.

Stephen Miller, in *Three Deaths and Enlightenment Thought*, shares the view that Marat never held a consistent position except espousing the necessity of eternal vigilance.[68] Likewise, Sagan suggests that Marat never argued but only accused in his newspaper, passionately urging that human sacrifices need be made to salvage the Revolution.[69] In part they are right. Marat lacked principles, except for perhaps the principle of vigilance. Yet, Marat held some level of consistency regarding his lack of faith in the people as well. Marat never believed in the most democratic measures, because he never believed in the people. Up until the Revolution, his moderate background caused him to argue that government should be managed by those with "the largest stake in the public weal"[70]—the wealthy—and that common people were too ignorant and already satisfied anyway. Later it seems he came to favor more democratic ideas, opposing many decrees of the National Assembly such as a law making National Assembly deputies inviolable, the active/passive division of citizens, and property qualifications for elections. Marat suggested that the 1791 Constitution could not be

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[67] Marat quoted in *Three Deaths*, Miller, 153.
[68] Miller, *Three Deaths,* 123.
[69] Sagan, *Citizens & Cannibals*, 125.
[70] Marat quoted in *Jean Paul Marat*, Gottschalk, 15.

implemented until it was granted approval by popular referendum. Yet he was against such a popular referendum when it was proposed to justify the execution of the king.[71] Marat might argue that the issue was not inconsistency on the principle of popular sovereignty but rather simple expediency, since the referendum in the case of the king's execution would have hindered what was both urgent and necessary for what he considered a matter of public safety. Yet his opposition to that referendum is not an isolated moment in his career, as many more imply his distrust of too much democracy.

The significance of Marat's commendation of the passage of the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789 is also suspect. While Marat felt that rights were important, at various times he also showed priority for laws over rights. In the *Polish Letters*, he suggested a maxim for people, poor and rich alike, to live by: "Be obedient to the laws of your country"[72]—hardly the expected rhetoric of a future revolutionary. Marat later suggested that honest citizens' obligation to laws depended upon the justness of the laws. While he eventually changed his mind on the matter of breaking laws and on the level of participation for the poor, though, Marat essentially remained more moderate based upon the concentration and organization of power he advocated. Even the most radical goals he pursued through moderate measures; he argued for intermediaries—kings, clubs, tribunals, dictators, and committees—between the people and power. Marat never advocated worker or peasant rule, which might be his one claim to substantive political consistency—ironic for a radical "Friend of the People."[73] Nevertheless, while I agree that Marat lacked consistency regarding a political program over the course of his life, his political development led him to what must be considered a radical set of ideas that do in

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[71] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 80, 81, 87, 130.
[72] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 199.
[73] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 81, 87, 15, 195, 103.

fact constitute a coherent politics. To reduce his program to its simplest expression, he believed in top-down social reforms—radical in goals but moderate in means. On that note, I ultimately disagree with most historians who prefer to think of Marat simply as a bloodthirsty demagogue.

Marat: The Living Prophet

> *What eye is so clear-seeing as to pierce the dark veil of futurity?*[74]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

Although Marat obviously held many flaws, ranging from logical fallacies and inconsistencies in his philosophy to character flaws, his admirers formed a cult of personality well before he died. Even in life, he had captivated some people and caused them to believe he possessed more than human powers. For example, according to several accounts, Marat appeared to have the power to curse, to heal, and to predict the future. In one story, Marat is said to have saved a man from lynching by kicking him in the rear and pronouncing him healed. The crowd held so much confidence in the "Friend of the People" that they let the suspected "aristocrat" go—the very one they seemed ready to tear apart just moments before.[75] Common people believed in Marat's supernatural authority, but other leaders of the Revolution revered Marat in a similar fashion. Desmoulins, for example, referred to Marat as "my honoured father" and "Pope."[76] Even more awe-inspiring for people was Marat's seeming ability to predict the future. He suggested Lafayette would eventually desert and that Mirabeau was in the pay of the king. Both proved true. Marat also warned of the King Louis XVI's flight before

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[74] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 156.
[75] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 9.
[76] Camille Desmoulins, "The Gironde Foxes," or "The Lafontaine of the Revolution," *Revolutions of France and Brabant,* No. 12. 1792 November, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 34-36.

it occurred.[77] He also accurately exposed networks of spies such as when he ousted the the so-called administrator of espionage, Perror, on February 4, 1791.[78] In an August 1792 issue of the *Friend of the People*, Marat enumerated his uncanny track-record for valid predictions. He stated that in the war "allies would be led to the slaughter by their treacherous generals," and Marat points out three "shameful defeats" at the beginning of the campaign as proof. Then he claimed that land such as the city of Bavay would be forfeited to enemies, which was, indeed, taken for the second time. He also predicted that the National Assembly would continue to betray the people and that its "faithless trustees" would continue to sell the people out.[79] Such apparent clairvoyance led to Marat's newspapers printing letters referring to him as "prophet."[80] After Marat's death, propaganda sought to endow his figure with divine qualities. Marat's knack for predicting the future might explain how his supposed divinity in the posthumous Cult of Marat was lent credibility by many supporters among the Parisian populace. Equally important to Marat's image after death was his real suffering, persecution, and sacrifice in life.

An Austere Life

> *[I]n one of my hours of disgust, I formed the plan of leaving society altogether. In departing from the luxurious scenes of high life I did not lose much... Was it only to suffer that I was placed on this earth? Hardly am I escaped from one danger when another pursues me.*[81]
> —The hermit in Marat's Polish Letters

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[77] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 63, 76.
[78] David Andress, *Massacre at the Champ de Mars: Popular Dissent and Political Culture in the French Revolution* (Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY: Royal Historical Society: Boydell Press, 2000), 78.
[79] Marat, "The Friend of the People to the French Patriots," *Writings of Marat*, 44-45.
[80] Paul Friedlander wrote this, "introduction" in *Writings of Marat*, 25.
[81] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 17, 162.

Like the hermit, Marat endured much persecution and suffering in the life of a radical recluse. For three years, Marat survived semi-clandestinely in underground hideouts and repeated flights abroad to avoid persecution.[82] Critics accused Marat of being bribed to write his invective-filled pamphlets and newspapers, but Marat truly lived in poverty, losing much of his money and social status because of his role in the Revolution.[83] While Marat was a "Friend of the People" to many allies in high as well as low social stations, he lost many political friends when his political usefulness was reduced. Exemplifying the sort of respect and influence Marat once commanded among the radical circles of Paris, in 1790, the National Guard battalion of the Cordeliers district protected Marat from the municipal government and the Châtelet police court. The guard set up checkpoints to prohibit the authorities from arresting Marat.[84] Prominent Jacobins oftentimes defended Marat in word and deed, as well. Once the Jacobins decisively defeated the Girondins, however, Marat's newspaper lost its patron and protector. Then, when disease had deteriorated enough of Marat's body to render him immobile, he could no longer attend the sessions of the National Convention.[85] Appropriately for a dogged conspiracy theorist, both disease and politics had, indeed, conspired to cause Marat's slow, pitiful, inconsequential downfall. However, a fateful martyrdom proved to be in the works for the ailing revolutionary.

Dreams of martyrdom had intruded on Marat since his youth. Marat even claimed that he tried to martyr himself when he was eleven: "I was never punished but once" by

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[82] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 124.
[83] Jean-Paul Marat, "Marat to Desmoulins," Letter to Desmoulins, 1790 June 24, in *Writings of Marat*, 71.
[84] R.B. Rose, *The Making of the Sans-Culottes: Democratic Ideas and Institutions in Paris* (Manchester; Dover, New Hampshire: Manchester University Press, 1983), 72.
[85] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 124.

parents, after which rather than "return under the rule of my master[s]," for two days Marat did not eat. His parents then locked him in a room for his obstinacy, and then he "opened the window and threw myself out," leaving a "mark of which I still bear on my forehead." After recounting the story, Marat himself admitted that his "highest ambition is to win the glory of immolating myself for France."[86] He considered persecution "a certificate of honor."[87] So it follows that martyrdom would be exactly what Marat wanted all along as well as his highest honor in the eyes of the public for at least a year after his death.

A Political Martyrdom

> *But what! Shall I, a mortal being, form eternal connections on the earth, where all is changing, all is passing, and from which I shall perhaps disappear tomorrow?*[88]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

Marat's assassin, Charlotte Corday, learned of the June 2, 1793 expulsion of the Girondins two days after the fact.[89] Corday was a native of Caen, where many Girondins fled starting in the spring of 1793 when their moderate ideas fell out of favor in Paris.[90] The expulsion of the Girondins from the Convention was the event that drove her to action, but Marat was already infamous in her mind since the September Massacres of the previous year. All of France knew Marat's name by the time of the September Massacres.[91]

Loomis suggests that Marat helped orchestrate the September Massacres, but he bases his conclusion simply upon Marat's association with the Commune of Paris and

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[86] Marat, "Jean-Paul Marat, Friend," *Great Jacobins*, 68, 69.
[87] Marat, "Marat to Desmoulins," 1790 June 24, *Writings of Marat,* 73.
[88] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 202.
[89] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 13.
[90] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 10.
[91] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 84.

with his September 3rd after-the-fact statements endorsing the "acts of justice" in slaughtering the prisoners. While Loomis allows that Marat was not the sort capable of directly murdering anyone, he fails to acknowledge another subtle difference between guilt and innocence—evidence of causality.[92] Other historians of the Reign of Terror such as Mortimer-Ternaux claim that the September Massacres were premeditated by Marat, but Gottschalk maintains there is no substantial evidence of this assertion. Rather, Marat was only indirectly guilty insofar as the influence of his ubiquitous opinions being there for a crowd to feed on when the moment was ripe for insurrections and violence—such as when his general diatribes against the royal family helped to fuel the insurrection of August 10, 1792. By Marat's own account, he claimed to be unprepared and shocked by the September Massacres.[93] While Corday also had no proof of Marat's direct instigation or participation in the September Massacres, she claimed her assassination was motivated by his guilt of that crime and of inciting France to civil war.[94] For Corday, it was probably enough that Marat *seemed* to be directly responsible. Marat himself made it no easier to disassociate himself from the September Massacres. He went so far as to justify the atrocity on the Convention floor: "The people were obedient to my voice. They saved France by appointing themselves to the dictatorship in order to kill traitors."[95] Although it is no evidence of direct causality between Marat's actions and the September Massacres, Marat continued to justify the atrocity as late as February of the following year.[96]

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[92] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 96-97.
[93] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 96, 124-125.
[94] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 98, 138.
[95] Marat, Speech to the National Convention, 1792, quoted in Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 99.
[96] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 127.

Within all the contradictions and controversies of the September Massacres, the overall relationship between Marat and the Terror is foreshadowed. While he certainly felt the September Massacres were justified, there was only indirect causality between his ideas and the actual incident. In addition, just as the September Massacres foreshadowed the Terror, Charlotte Corday foreshadowed the reaction of Thermidor. Before Thermidor could kill the Cult of Marat for the Terror it seemed to inspire and symbolize, Corday sought to kill Marat for the September Massacre he seemed to inspire and symbolize.

Marat's Death

> *O grave, place of horror where our vows are no longer heard, whence nobody has ever returned!*[97]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

Corday murdered Jean-Paul Marat in his bath where he soaked his disease-wracked body for hours each day.[98] The real scene of Marat's death—a shoe-shaped bathtub—was much more mundane than later artistic glorifications.[99] Likewise, the stage of the assassination was to be much less dramatic than Corday had intended. Originally, Charlotte Corday sought to murder Marat where she thought he committed one of his gravest crimes—at the meeting hall of the National Convention where he demanded the king's execution within twenty-four hours.[100] In demanding the swift death of Louis XVI at the National Convention, Marat had assumed that the "feelings of the Parisians are shared by all the citizens of the departments."[101] Corday planned to show Marat the error of his judgment in the very place he passed the judgment. Marat's skin disease ruined

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[97] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 156.
[98] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 123.
[99] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 128. See image of David's Painting, *Marat Assassinated*, on page 62 of this thesis.
[100] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 10. Marat voted for execution within 24 hours in January 1793; Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 158.
[101] Jean-Paul Marat, "Marat on the King's Execution," *Journal de la République, No. CV.* 1783 January 21, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 65.

her plan, however, and he perished more in the fashion of a helpless martyr than like a powerful criminal.[102]

Marat's common-law wife turned Corday away twice at the door, but Marat admitted her to his room after a trial of stubborn persistence and a promise to disclose thousands of names of Norman traitors. Corday offered information regarding the insurgency in her hometown of Caen, including the names of Girondins. As Marat wrote the names, Corday pulled out her knife and stabbed Marat through the lung and aorta. Marat died from his wounds that day, July 13, 1793.[103]

Just as Marat's acquittal from the accusations of the Girondins seemed to prove his patriotism and inviolability, the assassination demonstrated for many people the proof of Marat's revolutionary purity.[104] When the people of the faubourg Saint-Germain discovered Marat had been assassinated, crowds of enraged citizens gathered, clamoring for the chance to exact revenge on Charlotte Corday. A woman at the scene begged for the opportunity to "dismember the monster and eat her filthy body, piece by piece."[105] Such fervent desires for revenge and mourning for Marat was but a prelude to the cult worship that his legacy inspired in the people.

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[102] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution,* 10.
[103] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 123; Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 129-130; Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 168.
[104] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 65.
[105] Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1989), 737.

CHAPTER 2

The Cult of Marat: The Popular and Artistic Sects

A Revolutionary Funeral

> *But this world is subject to change; every instant there is a new scene... Now the earth is enameled with verdure and crowned with flowers and fruit. Now it is despoiled of its foliage. Beings themselves change their nature. Subjected to gentle heat, an egg is converted into flesh; and this flesh buried in dust, itself becomes dust... [A] dead man buried is no longer a man.*[106]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

Mona Ozouf demonstrates how funeral ceremonies acted as symbolic markers for the various phases of the Revolution in her study, *Festivals and the French Revolution.* In addition to the funerals of Marat's enemy Mirabeau, Ozouf includes Marat's funeral as an event both marking the time of change and representing the nature of change for the politics of the French Revolution.[107] The change in Marat's funeral's case was a radical change, and Jacques-Louis David sought to represent the new radical direction through the funeral festival he organized.

That David would take the helm for the Cult of Marat is no surprise. The two were close friends of similar backgrounds and complimentary personalities. Both men grew up ugly and disfigured, both clashed with the old royal academies, and both worked for the King Louis XVI's brother, the Comte d' Artois. David also felt a natural attraction as an artist to Marat's grotesque manner and features and his theatrical

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[106] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 39-40.
[107] Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 82.

nature.[108] David, Marat's friend and a member of the Committee of General Security, by no means created the Cult of Marat. If David played a large role in initiating the cult, he was helped by Marat's personal cultivation of his own legacy and by the popular effervescence that followed Marat's figure through life and into death. David managed, however, to re-launch the Cult of Marat in the most extravagant fashion with a six-hour funeral boasting dominant themes of radicalism and patriotic glory. Marat's funeral festival began inside the old church confiscated by the Cordeliers Club where Marat's embalmed body loomed over the people on the bier. The primary challenge for David was how to clean up and present an idealized body of the rotting cadaver without also compromising the evidence of violence suffered and blood lost by the martyr in the name of the Revolution. David chose to show the wound of the torso to represent the act of sacrifice, while placing a pen in Marat's lax hand to imply immortality. To top off the aura of everlasting life, David crowned Marat with oak leaves to symbolize immortal genius. Aside from ubiquitous incense urns, republican paraphernalia provided the backdrop for the entire ceremony with model "liberty trees" as well as mountains symbolizing the leadership of Montagnard radicals in the convention. Other artifacts peculiar to Marat filled the old chapel: the bloody robe and bath of his revolutionary death and the desk, inkwell, paper and writings symbolic of his revolutionary life. At some point during the funeral, an orator pled that the memory of Marat's bloodshed be planted inside everyone as the "seed of intrepid republicans." Deliberately or not, the orator exploited the language of Christian communion toward revolutionary ends—a

[108] Simon Schama, *The Power of Art* (New York: Ecco, 2006), 217.

theme of secular sainthood that was perpetuated throughout the Cult of Marat. The body of Marat lay in state for two days.[109]

For the procession, David placed Marat's body on a raised couch, which was drawn by twelve men. Members of the convention trailed the bier, followed by municipal authorities, and then "The People"—of which Marat claimed to be so fond—brought up the rear with banners designating each section of Paris they represented. Every five minutes, a canon salute sounded as the funeral procession weaved through the Paris streets. The torch-lit procession met eulogizing sans-culottes at stations along the way, and the people filled in the silence between eulogies by singing patriotic songs. Wielding cypress branches, white-clad girls surrounded the procession with a Parisian crowd following, intoning "O coeur de Jesus, O Coer de Morat." Four women carried Marat's bath in the torch-lit procession, and another citizen held Marat's blood-stained shirt at the end of a pike.[110] The fetishism of relics foreshadows what was to become Marat's quasi-sainthood during the Cult of Marat.

Ozouf points out that funeral processions such as Marat's often sought to affect the passage of time through the use of space. In other words, the processions showed a chronological development by the order of the scenes passing through the procession. In Marat's case, however, Ozouf shows that only the final section of the procession was truly chronological, the rest being more thematic. First in the thematic order, events such as Marat attacking the throne of the despots, condemning treacherous generals, or engaged in solemn writing represented aspects of Marat's revolutionary career. Most

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[109] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 124-125; Schama, *Citizens*, 742-743; Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 141; Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 160; Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 186.

[110] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 141; Miller, *Three Deaths*, 125; Sophie Monneret, *David and Neo-Classicism*, trans., Chris Miller and Peter Snowdon (Paris: Terrail, c1999), 114-115; Schama, *Citizens*, 744.

likely David chose to include the well-known aspects of Marat's career first, because it was that particular series of acts that distinguished Marat and warranted his elaborate funeral in the first place. After the procession of famous or infamous acts, David chose to include a series of scenes depicting "private Virtues," which demonstrated Marat's supposed piety in his daily life. Next David included a "Chariot of Rewards," which held the tributes and crowns that he felt Marat had earned by virtue of his public and private acts and virtues. Finally, at the end of the procession David followed a chronological order in the "Chariot of Examples," which was composed of a serious of ascending age groups at once representing the development of Marat and imitating his examples. With the inevitable representation of Marat dying for the Revolution coming at the end, the logic of the order served to reinforce David's message of radical patriotism—not just duty to the *patrie* but sacrifice.[111]

Despite the aura of a saint-like purity already following Marat through the streets in the procession, David encountered some logistical problems for maintaining the perception of the body as a holy figure. Because the procession took place in July, and because Marat's body was diseased and putrid even before death, it was necessary to sprinkle perfumes over the body as its stench overwhelmed many of the patriotic pilgrims.[112] Marat's body had also turned green in the July heat, which was coincidental since Marat had been compared to a frog because of his ugly facial features when he was alive. Even more ironic, the tongue of Marat—the one that no reactionary police could silence in life—kept lolling out of his head. David eventually just cut the tongue out.[113] Eventually the rancid body reached its first resting place at the Cordeliers' Club garden

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[111] Ozouf, *Festivals*, 153-154.
[112] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 6.
[113] Schama, *Power of Art*, 217, 219.

where it was temporarily entombed after the ceremony. The Cordeliers also declared the separately embalmed heart of Marat to be the "natural property of the Cordeliers" and suspended the urn containing the heart over the meeting hall in the Cordelier's chapel.[114]

The government financed the lavish affair of Marat's funeral. The ceremony attracted not only hordes of common people but also representatives of the National Convention and representatives from the sections of Paris and the departments.[115] However, there was a conspicuous lack of official representation from the Convention or its committees. Rather, the Cordeliers Club and other popular sections and societies participated most in the funeral ceremonies.[116] Aside from David's organization and the publically financed nature of the funeral, such a lack of official support indicates the tenuous relationship between the Jacobin leaders and the Cult of Marat. The tone of the ceremony was one of cautious encouragement and control. The funeral demonstrates some level of Jacobin ambivalence, which the government was to show toward the Cult of Marat for almost the next two years. While a standard role for Jacobins in authority had been to organize public spectacles to unify political expression toward their own official vision of society, apprehension existed about communities' self-mobilization, especially with regards to commemorating the death of a troublemaker like Marat.[117]

For some paranoid Jacobins, especially Robespierre, more negative feelings ranged from happiness for the death of the rabble-rouser to jealousy over his adulation. Robespierre felt that the Jacobin Club "should not be thinking about all this vain pomp.

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[114] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 142; Schama, *Citizens*, 744.
[115] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 186.
[116] Schama, *Citizens*, 742-743.
[117] Thomas Gretton, "Marat, *L'Ami Du Peuple*, David: Love and Discipline in the Summer of '93," in *David's Marat*, 43.

The best way of avenging Marat is to track down his enemies without mercy."[118] Thus Robespierre favored a policy typical of Jacobins in dealing with the Cult of Marat—trying to control and manipulate popular sentiment and the symbol of Marat. Oftentimes, the Jacobins followed this procedure to achieve ends Marat himself would have favored, yet their motivations seem more political than the "patriotic" reasons Marat would have suggested. That is not to imply, of course, that Marat himself lacked political motivations. Yet Marat would probably not have approved of the political motivations of the Jacobins in reducing his life and death to a symbol to be exploited for political aggrandizement.

Lynn Hunt suggests that many symbols of the Revolution received an investment of meaning and enthusiasm from the people well before official ceremonies ever sanctioned them. She suggests that the government adoption of liberty symbols started around 1789 or 1790, but the motive was not simply exploitation of the popular enthusiasm for "liberty trees," patriotic altars, and popular saints. Hunt claims that the government's intent was as much to defuse the threat of such rallying points as to officially recognize them.[119] The push and pull game proliferating Cult of Marat symbols, investing or divesting meanings along the way, continued after Marat's funeral. The Jacobins found within Marat a unique symbol to manipulate, because the nature of his death took on such symbolic value in the people's eyes. Despite the ready-made comparisons to Christ, Brutus, and high ideals, Marat also remained essentially easier to identify with as a personality whose legend in life must have been readily remembered during the course of the cult-hood year after he died. Antoine Prost suggests that the

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[118] Robespierre quoted in *Paris in the Terror*, Loomis, 142.
[119] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 60.

problem with Republican propaganda had always been that it was legalistic and abstract. The Jacobins, too, encountered difficulty in communicating their messages and needed to personify the Republic, because crowds failed to connect with the goddess Reason.[120] Yet it seems that the Jacobins sought to have it both ways with the symbol of the "Friend of the People." Artists and orators often portrayed him as common in a poor humble way yet elevated to the greatest of virtues. For artists and propagandists, Marat was a human vector for the virus of high ideals, just as the cliché comparisons to Christ suggested over and over again.

French Fashions: Marat Carved in Stone

> *Of all people on earth the French are perhaps the greatest slaves of opinion. Light and gentle, and incessantly governed by custom, they let themselves be carried away by the torrent without ever bothering themselves about the reason... even in their inmost hearts fashion has established its empire. The intellect, virtue itself, depends on fashion.*[121]
> —Kamia in Marat's *Polish Letters*

From September of 1793 to March of 1794, the Cult of Marat lived quite healthily.[122] Marat's death spurred the erection of memorials all over France. As artistic adulators unveiled busts in honor of Marat throughout the country, the idols inspired spontaneous orations and outpourings of public sentiments.[123] The monuments ranged from those officially commissioned by the government to those independently erected in other public spaces. One of the first idols—a death mask of Marat—sat in the very window of Marat's own apartment.[124] David again lent his talents to the Cult of Marat by

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[120] Antoine Prost, "Monuments to the Dead," in *Realms of Memory* Vol II, ed., Pierre Nora, trans., Authur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, c1996), 330, 323.
[121] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol I, 146.
[122] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 17.
[123] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 186.
[124] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 6.

sculpting a statue of the martyr to be placed in the National Convention meeting hall.[125] Also drafted to sculpt a bust of Marat, Beauvallet placed a second figure inside the General Council.[126] The St. Eustache Club, a women's organization, built a wooden obelisk paying tribute to Marat.[127] A bust of Marat replaced the statue of the Virgin Mary on the Rue aux Ours in front of a restaurant. The inscriptions on this public monument read on one side, "He was the People's Friend and a deep observer," and on the other, "Not being able to corrupt him, they assassinated him." For Marat's original grave site in the Cordeliers garden, J.F. Martin sculpted a monument of "granite blocks in a sort of mound surmounted by a quadrangular pyramid with an urn" and an inscription reading "Here lies Marat, the People's Friend, assassinated by the People's enemies, July 13, 1793."[128]

Every detail of the monuments proves significant in understanding the Cult of Marat. Prost suggests that any typology of memorials must include scrutiny of at least three measures: the location of monuments, the nature of monuments (statuary or non-statuary; realistic or idealized), and the inscriptions on the monuments. In terms of location, indoor or outdoor is the first consideration. Because Marat's ceremonies and monuments appear to be overwhelmingly out of doors, Prost would suggest that the monuments and ceremonies establish an "open cult" because they took place outside in public spaces, rather than indoors. The public spaces held enough room to gather around a center, yet the spaces belonged to no one in particular and were therefore appropriately the property of all. Prost writes that near churches or cemeteries, one finds a subclass of

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[125] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 187.
[126] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 73.
[127] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 187.
[128] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 74-76.

"aggrieved" monuments, which reaffirm patriotic sacrifice in such a way as to make the *patrie* transcend reality to a metaphysical plane as normally God would. Such transcendent qualities make the sacrifice of martyrdom seem worth it. These monuments differ from pure funerary monuments, which focus more on grief without offering any redemptive qualities for it, thus encouraging pacifism especially if the dead is a soldier or a statesman who was killed by the enemy. Since Marat's inscriptions emphasized his incorruptibility and his affinity with the People as the reasons for why he was assassinated, the implication is that the price of sacrifice in martyrdom is worth the civic virtues the republican monuments espoused.

While the inscriptions mention "death," which Prost suggests is an indication of a passive message, the word is more often "assassinate," which incites to revenge and again reminds people of their enemies. Apart from death references, omitting the country of the patriot is another pacifistic sign, but references to the "People's Friend" might supplant that condition indicating civic duty and patriotism. Likewise, Prost would classify the monuments as militant or nationalist (and not just patriotic) because while glorifying Marat, the inscriptions actually reference his enemies. Another indication that Marat's monuments glorified his death more than grieved over it, the nature of the monuments proved unrealistic. If the monuments had been cast or carved similar to Marat's decaying body at the time of death, grief or pity might have been the public reaction. As the most notable monuments seemed to be obelisks and pyramids, rather than a realistic depiction of Marat's death, Prost would infer that the message to the public was patriotic, not passive.[129]

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[129] Material from the previous paragraph found in Prost, "Monuments," *Realms of Memory* Vol II, 307, 328, 314, 316, 312-313, 315.

The busts of Marat, in particular, deserve further inquiry as to their significance for the Cult of Marat. While obelisks and pyramids are documented in the most detail, the busts seemed to be the medium of choice for commemoration. Ozouf lists three reasons why sculpture is such a significant expression in a political society such as France. First, she suggests that sculptures uniquely stress a connection to ancient cultures and their glory; second, sculptures are solid structures, which imply eternity and therefore promises of immortality; and finally, the limited expression engraved in stone lends to a basic but sometimes powerful message that can be very effective in edifying the populace.[130] That the Cult of Marat would gravitate toward sculpture is not surprising, since much of the propaganda sought to give Marat a heroic mystique, thus necessarily linking him to classical characters of the past. In addition, Marat himself showed a personal concern for pedagogical effects and how monuments influence the values of a people when he published a pre-election anti-Girondist handbill on August 28, 1792, stating: "Nor must you grant any recognition to the City Deputies who voted in 1792 for the erection of a monument to Lafayette."[131] It is unclear what Marat would have thought of his own monuments,[132] but at least it can be inferred from the Lafayette comment that he considered the commission and creation of monuments to be significant statements for a government and a people.

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[130] Mona Ozouf, "The Pantheon: The École Normale of the Dead," in *Realms of Memory:Rethinking the French Past* (Volume III: Symbols), ed., Pierre Nora, trans., Aurthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 333.

[131] Jean-Paul Marat, "Marat, the People's Friend, to the Faithful Parisians," Handbill, 1792 August 28, in *Writings of Marat,* 55.

[132] While impossible to know what Marat would have thought of his own monuments, he considered monuments and pageantry in general to be the work of government diversionists to make people's "slavery" more bearable. In *Chains of Slavery*, he vented such thoughts: that kings build monuments while subjects starve, that the public is stupid for falling for the vain beauty and pomp of these traps. Jean Paul Marat, *Chains of Slavery*, (Ann Arbor, London: University Microfilms International, 1978), 118,186,187,191.

Diderot had stated that statues function as a literature of the poor.[133] Thus the messages of monuments might have been a proper recourse for the Cult of Marat to flourish among lower classes. To affect eternity and divinity and to circumvent barriers of illiteracy, the stone-carved expressions of commemoration seemed literally the cornerstones for the successful continuation of the Cult of Marat. As I describe in Chapter 3, however, the monuments were symbolically destroyed during Thermidor—thereby powerfully signaling the end of Marat's would-be sainthood, just as their erection seemed to signal the beginning.

"Bust of Marat"[134]

[133] Ozouf, "Pantheon," *Realms of Memory* Vol III, 333.
[134] American Social History Productions, Inc., "Bust of Marat," *Liberty Equality Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/43/html>.

Commemorations and Dedications to Marat

In their eternal compliments [the French] prostitute to a nobody the words of affection, emotion, attachment, adoration. What words remain to them with which to address a friend, father, or benefactor?[135]
—Kamia in Marat's *Polish Letters*

By December of 1793, over fifty ceremonies had commemorated Marat in Paris since his death in July. The story of Marat's life and death and his legend were discussed throughout the country. In many cases, speaking of Marat was a practical necessity, as so many people and institutions changed their names to honor the dead patriot. For example, the Section of Marseilles took for its new name the Section of Marat. Over thirty communes added Marat to their new names. The term, montmartre, which meant hill or street, thenceforth became montmarat. The *Place de l' Ami du Peuple* replaced what was formerly known as the *Place de l' Observance*. Marat's posthumous influence was not limited to Paris. Thirty-seven towns changed their name in honor of their hero. Parents and military authorities christened their children and regiments Marat. Even Napoleon's brother-in-law, the future King of Naples, temporarily changed his name from Murat to Marat. One "infernal Column" referred to itself as the Marat company with its individual troops each calling themselves a Marat. "Marat" even became one of the revolutionary army's battle cries. Oddly enough, considering Marat's opposition to food monopolists and profiteers, a new restaurant called the Grand Marat opened on the rue Saint-Honoré. Perhaps most absurdly, two priests—already revolutionary by virtue of their both being married—baptized a baby in September "in the name of the Most High Liberty" Brutus-Marat-Lepeletier.[136]

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[135] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol I, 125.

Despite the seeming adoration of Marat in the renaming of persons and places, another dimension of opportunism and perhaps even subversion seems to be at work as well. In a speech before the Revolutionary Tribunal on March 13, 1794, St. Just suggested that those taking the name Marat for themselves were false prophets. St. Just stated that the motivation of many for taking on the name of Marat was to hide one's real name to avert their own history of misdeeds. It is difficult to determine all the dynamics at work, since St. Just was closely allied with Robespierre and would therefore be suspicious of popular activity in general. Maybe the real issue for St. Just and others was that the Cult of Marat seemed to be spiraling out of Jacobin control. After all, while Marat was still alive, within certain Jacobin circles (such as Philippe Lebas'), the name "Maratiste" was synonymous with "rioter" and "agitator."[137] Nevertheless, St. Just charged that many of the new Marats exploited the name for their own gain, and in some cases, engaged in counterrevolutionary actions:

> The counter-revolutionaries have more than once clothed themselves in the disguise of patriotism. There was a self-christened Marat at Nancy the other day, trying to inflame and embroil the country. A Marat appeared also at Strasbourg; he called himself the Marat of the Rhine; he was a priest and an Austrian, and he aided the counter-revolution. There has never been but one Marat. His successors are hypocrites and shams who make his very ghost to blush. Virtue is inimitable.[138]

Aside from suggesting the tensions between the Jacobins and the popular Cult of Marat, St. Just's comments imply that the name Marat was becoming not merely a symbol but almost a revolutionary office—part popular tribune and part agent of sedition.

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[136] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 17; Schama, *Citizens*, 745; Gottscalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 186, 187, 190; J.M. Collot D'Herbois, Letter to Robespierre, 1794 November, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 86; Hundreds of names like Marat-Brutus and Sans-Culottes-Marat were registered for newborns of this time. Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 76.

[137] Lebas, Letter to Father, *Great Jacobins*, 123.

[138] Louis de St. Just, "Foreign Factors and their Plots to Destroy the French Republic by Bribery and Corruption," Speech, 13 March, 1794, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 95-96.

To inherit the mantle of Marat, to take his title, implied that one should somehow then endeavor to carry on his work but that one should also fulfill background requirements. Beyond asserting that a foreigner or former priest could never be the next Marat, St. Just essentially stated that no one could ever live up to the title.

Revolutionary Trappings

> *Altogether too high a price is lavished on the face, manners, fine demeanor, gibberish, dress,—and too little attention is paid to the stern duties of life.*[139]
> —Kamia in Marat's *Polish Letters*

From the Fall of 1793 to Robespierre's fall the next year, Cult of Marat paraphernalia filled not only public spaces and streets but also personal spaces and wardrobes.[140] People not only built monuments and named places in honor of Marat but also his martyrdom inspired the wearing of Cult of Marat mementos.[141] Women wore rings and brooches with Marat's portrait. New fashions also included a coiffure *à la Marat*. For men, Marat's portrait decorated scarf-pins, and tiny busts of pure silver dangled as charms from their watches. Men also wore watches manufactured with Marat's face as an enamel ornament on the case. Colored effigies graced ladies' fans. People also carried Marat's profile on their snuff-boxes, which was one of the most popular of the commercial exploitations in the Cult of Marat.[142]

Additionally, prints of the assassination scene proved popular throughout France.[143] Prints depicting the death scene, oftentimes distributed by the Jacobin Clubs, circulated throughout France to spread the gospel and attract more of the faithful to the

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[139] Marat, *Polish Letters*, Vol I, 113.
[140] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 103.
[141] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 187.
[142] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 76.
[143] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 125.

Cult of Marat.[144] R.R. Palmer notes that while so called patriots bought many pictures depicting Marat's assassination, royalists bought the same prints but for completely different reasons. Instead of remembering Marat, they sought to commemorate "their angel of mercy" in Corday.[145]

Tokens of cult-hood such as apparel and prints might seem insignificant in comparison to busts, plays, and paintings. In reality, however, the size and scope of the commemoration is not as inconsequential as one might think. The small acts and distinctions of cult participation actually represent the most democratic, "popular," and therefore intense proof of the Cult of Marat. Nora defines *Les Lieux de Mémoire*—roughly translated as sites, realms, or zones of memory—as things that "demonstrate empirically the hidden connection between all true memorials—monuments to the dead, as in the Panthéon—and objects as seemingly different as museums, commemorations, archives, heraldic devices or emblems."[146] Behind the Cult of Marat, the same dominant force seems to be at work in the production of a tiny button as in an oversized bust—and that force is a radicalizing collective memory.

The Supernatural Cult of Marat

> *[T]his God, who begins by choosing himself a people,—this God, whom his ministers always paint to us as jealous, wrathful, and implacable, crying incessantly for vengeance, forever threatening with his wrath...*[147]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

While admittedly eccentric, all commemorations discussed thus far seem natural consequences for the death of a national figure. Some manifestations of memorial,

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[144] Schama, *Citizens*, 745-746.
[145] Robert Roswell Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 38.
[146] Nora, *Rethinking France*, XIX.
[147] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 92-93.

however, transcended the natural. Supernatural sentiments such as the politician Danton conjuring the "ghost of Marat" imply a deeper level at which the Cult of Marat inspired people.[148] One newspaper, *Publiciste de la Republique Francaise*, categorically denied Marat's death and affirmed his godly omniscience under a headline of *MARAT N'EST POINT MORT*: "His soul, released from its earthly casing, glides around all parts of the Republic all the more capable of introducing itself into the councils of federalists and tyrants."[149] Corday, Marat's assassin, even used the language of religion in describing her actions in a letter to Barbaroux: "On leaving Caen, I expected to sacrifice him on the summit of the Montagne of the National Convention."[150] Radical patriotism seemed to be the state religion in the wake of Marat's death.[151] One Cordelier, Morel, intoned:

> O heart of Jesus, O heart of Marat... you have the same right to our homage. O heart of Marat, sacre Coeur... can the works and benevolence of the son of Mary be compared with those of the Friend of the People and his apostles to the Jacobins of our holy Mountain?... Their Jesus was but a false prophet but Marat is a god. Long live the heart of Marat [which he was literally facing in the agate urn]... Like Jesus, Marat loved the people ardently... Like Jesus, Marat detested nobles, priests, the rich, the scoundrels. Like Jesus, he led a poor and frugal life...[152]

That Morel should speak while facing Marat's heart is significant, because the act suggests that something like a cult of relics was taking shape in honor of the revolutionary saint. In addition, Morel did not narrowly focus upon Marat's martyrdom. His rhetoric also invested the life of Marat with holy meaning. The words, "works and benevolence," are often charged with religious significance. Consider the centuries-old theological debates concerning the motivations of a "benevolent God" or the question of

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[148] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 187.
[149] Schama, *Citizens*, 744.
[150] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 71.
[151] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 125.
[152] Morel quoted in *Citizens*, Schama, 744.

whether one is "saved by works" or by faith. That Marat seemed to influence people such as Morel to praise his entire being—his life works, the act of his death, and his legacy—implies a supernatural level of faith in his virtue.

Admittedly, the most supernatural or deifying aspects of the cult represent a minority of the commemorations that are documented. Ozouf argues that even sainthood is an exaggeration. She claims that the street altars and other supernatural effects do not necessarily suggest that the public actually viewed Marat as deified or even sanctified. For one, Ozouf suggests, counterrevolutionary historiography originally proliferated the images of kneeling, enraptured masses, presumably to explain away radical commemorations as the street mobs' equivalent of mental illness. In addition, when Marat showed up in effigy alongside Christ in popular processions, Ozouf claims it was more a statement humanizing Jesus than it was meant to deify Marat. Ozouf goes on to note that the revolutionary vocabulary frivolously attached words like immortality and martyr to many figures. Finally, she concludes that the popular cults of sainthood such as Marat's lacked "therapeutic powers" or "sacralizing protection." Divesting the Cult of Marat of all religious intention and function, Ozouf states that the festivals in the sections and the clubs where busts were unveiled simply amounted to a "revival of emotions."[153]

I find evidence to the contrary, however. Some reports indicate that people invoked Marat's name for protection, actually canonizing him and referring to him explicitly as "Saint Marat."[154] Furthermore an article in *Publiciste de la Republique Francaise* suggested that Marat's "spirit" possessed many of the attributes Ozouf claims people never believed it did—including protective powers. In addition, like the

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[153] Ozouf, *Festivals*, 266, 267.
[154] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 75.

therapeutic and sanctified protection attributed to the relics of the bodies of saints, at least one citizen moved that Marat's embalmed body be presented throughout the provinces to inspire "the love of liberty in the souls truly republican."[155]

Many of the main points of Ozouf's argument too quickly dismiss even the possibility of a personality cult or patriotic myth transforming or being incorporated into a religious cult or myth. Ozouf herself even admits that "certain religious needs" were satisfied by the cult, and she speculates that a popular "transfer of sacrality" occurred because of the *Horror Vacui*—or fear of the empty space—left by the persecution of Catholicism during the Revolution.[156] Whether profound philosophical nuance or semantics are at work in Ozouf's arguments, the fact is that the Cult of Marat might have been a predominantly patriotic phenomenon but it was ultimately conceived within a religious framework. Social memory seemed to be trending at least toward sainthood, though not necessarily a totally new religion. Maurice Halbwachs claims that all religions symbolically represent some history of great events. Marat lived and died surrounded by a plethora of great events of which he came to be a symbol, the Terror itself being the obvious example. Halbwachs goes on to note that two types of religions exist, one to honor dead ancestors and the other to pay homage to the "Cult of Olympians." The latter, he writes, is a public and national religion identified more often with the "powers of nature" and with a deity being the mythical founder of a city. The tribe of a given ancient city often thought of its dead or mythical founder as possessing nature's power to protect the city.[157] Consider again the parallel in the *Publiciste de la*

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[155] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 73.
[156] Ozouf, *Festivals*, 267.
[157] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed., trans., intro., Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 84.

Republique Francaise article's suggestion that Marat's "spirit" soars through the sky to watch over the *patrie*. Thus the Cult of Marat seems to fit the development of a Cult of Olympians, as the protective powers of nature are implied in the article's assertion that Marat is vigilant and capable of flight—something like a ghostly bird of prey.

Furthermore, Halbwachs demonstrates through the example of Christianity and Judaism that all religions necessarily grow out of the frameworks of older belief systems, oftentimes using the same symbols and language of their predecessors.[158] Hence Marat is compared to Jesus by nearly all Sans-Culottes and Jacobins in the fervor of 1793 and 1794, although the most zealous such as Morel suggest that Marat is even greater than Jesus.[159] On April 20, 1794, Billaud-Varennes delivered a speech that does not explicitly compare Marat to Jesus, but the conceptual framework of sacrifice for humanity and immortality as a reward are both there. His idea of a religion of Marat incentivizes martyrdom with the prospect of fame, and he explicitly points out that "magnanimous hearts" sought to imitate and resemble Marat. All in the assembly, he suggests, should "look calmly and steadily forward to the Pantheon!"[160] While Marat was not yet in the Pantheon in April 1794,[161] the parallels to a civic fame and immortality reminiscent of heaven and communion with holy virtues certainly are already there.

Lynn Hunt notes the shift that took place toward a patriotic religion, including not just replacement of saints with revolutionary symbols but also of priests with government officials and pageant masters.[162] Many contemporary accounts from the Terror justify

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[158] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 86.
[159] See page 49 of this thesis.
[160] Jean Nicolas Billaud-Varennes, "Le Patriote Rectiligne," From Speech on Theory of Democratic Government, 20 April, 1794, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 100.
[161] The Convention had voted to entomb his ashes there in November, 1793, but the Jacobins never actually followed through on the Pantheonization.
[162] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 61.

this historical view. Some were more explicit in using a Christian framework. One orator compared shopkeepers to publicans, aristocrats to Pharisees, and Lafayette to Herod, while suggesting Marat's common law wife was akin to Mary for protecting Marat from Lafayette's sword just as Mary had saved the infant Christ in Egypt.[163] Halbwachs argues that as time passes, religions become more "retrograde" if they are perceived as in social isolation dogmatically resisting outside developments. If the Catholic Church is the parallel, then so-called refractory priests are to blame for the "retrograde" nature of the Christian religion in France during the Terror. Halbwachs uses the example of Christianity supplanting Judaism but incorporating many of its most recent and therefore socially relevant content.[164] If we apply that template of religious memory to the Terror, the inclusion of parts of Jesus' teachings and some of Christ's biography and symbols into the Cult of Marat seem to imply that the cult might have been trending toward more than mere sainthood. For instance, some schools compelled children to make the sign of the cross at the utterance of Marat's name.[165]

Ultimately, it was not what was incorporated into the Cult of Marat from Christianity but what was left out that is truly significant. Where, for example, are references to Yaweh or the Holy Spirit? Where is the emphasis on the Church hierarchy or even its sacraments? I came across references to Jesus and Mahomet, but no Old Testament prophets are mentioned in any of the biblical parallels for Marat or any of the revolutionary heroes for that matter. Charlotte Corday is compared to the apocryphal Judith[166]—a tyrant killer in her own right, but during the Terror Judith could just as likely

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[163] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 75.
[164] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 93.
[165] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 75.
[166] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 167.

be considered delusional and perhaps even reactionary if linked to the actions of Corday. The research of Halbwachs indicates that the reason for omissions of this kind is a matter of social relevance. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the less radical prophets—orthodox religious memory in general—seemed on the whole irrelevant to the social realities of the Revolution. The Cult of Marat chose to keep only those aspects of ancient religion that were radical in their teachings and radical in their break from a past authority—hence Jesus and Mahomet were included but not the others. Yet for the Cult of Marat, even Jesus' teachings often seemed inferior or reactionary compared to those of Marat. As early as in *Chains of Slavery*, Marat himself attacked Christianity for many of the reasons his followers were later to condemn Jesus. Marat felt Christian teachings proved contrary to patriotism and that Christian meekness enabled government to make slaves of its subjects.[167] Or as a later Cult of Marat follower suggested, Jesus "caused superstition to be born; he defended kings," while Marat "had the courage to wipe them out of existence."[168]

The Other Ideal—Brutus

> *But Caesar, Alexander, these destroyers of humanity... Are not these ambitious brigands regarded as heroes, like Brutus or Cato? ... The virtuous man is the generous hero who sacrifices his life for his fellows... It is Cato who rends his own entrails... It is Brutus...*[169]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

No discussion of the nature of Marat's cult-hood is complete without discussing it within the context of the cult of Brutus. While Marat's cult-hood exploded onto the scene in 1793 and burned out just as abruptly within little more than a year, the cult of

[167] Marat, *Chains of Slavery*, 115-117.
[168] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 75.
[169] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 117, 174.

Brutus began even before the Revolution. However, the events of the Revolution invested new meaning and energy into Voltaire's play and David's painting, which provided the symbols and language that were later used as building blocks for a fierce propaganda campaign in the revolutionary version of the cult. The cult of Brutus was not bookended neatly by events like Marat's had been with Marat's own assassination and the execution of Robespierre. Instead, the cult of Brutus transcended revolutionary phases and was inherently malleable because the interpretations of the legend changed. Lucius Junius Brutus was also a figure of antiquity separated by two millennia from the revolution and so perhaps considered more of a republican ideal than a real human being tainted by personal vendettas and controversies. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that the cult of Brutus—the celebration of an ideal—overshadowed the Cult of Marat—the celebration of a divisive, controversial, and flawed mortal—in prevalence and influence during the Revolution. [170]

In David's 1789 work, *The Lictors Bringing Brutus the Bodies of his Sons*, Brutus was painted as a hero and a champion of republican liberty for placing the national interest above his own family.[171] That heroism and sacrifice also took on dramatic proportions in Voltaire's play. One of the most popular quotes, encapsulating what was then thought to be the ultimate manifestation of republican duty and sacrifice, was "to death shall my sons be led."[172] By the time of Marat's death and the beginning of the Terror in 1793, however, people began to consider Marat's martyrdom an even more powerful symbolic sacrifice than sentencing one's traitorous sons to death as Brutus did.

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[170] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 15, 16, 103.
[171] Monneret, *David and Neo-Classicism*, 92.
[172] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 111.

Marat became the ultimate symbol of sacrifice, as he himself had suffered, worked, bled, and died for the Revolution.

One significant detail appears to show how the symbol of Marat was beginning to supplant the function of Brutus's symbol. Throughout the Revolution, the figure of Brutus presided over public ceremonies and figured very prominently into propaganda as the supreme judge of men's actions. His figure took on an aura of not only perfect republican virtue but omnipresent vigilance as well. During revolutionary tribunals, both sides regularly appealed to his bust for proper guidance in how to judge the accused. Brutus's bust also seemed to preside as supreme judge and ideal republican example in the convention hall. In the final months of the Terror, however, Marat's bust replaced Brutus's at the place of highest honor in the National Convention—in front of the speaker's rostrum. Perhaps the gesture means that the Revolution itself was shifting away from its own ideal and toward a more divisive and controversial creed of radicalism.

While that interpretation makes perfect sense, I believe the gesture of replacing Brutus with Marat speaks of not only the changing nature of the Revolution itself but of the changing nature of Marat's myth and cult. As the Terror reached its climax in 1794, Marat seemed to be a new ideal, the supreme judge, and the most omnipresent symbolic force of the heroes both ancient and modern—owing as much to official adoption and exploitation as effervescent popular commemoration. The Revolution made many martyrs that can be included in the so called-cult of revolutionary saints. While figures such as Lepeletier and Chalier flanked Brutus and Marat as saints of revolutionary propaganda, Marat's cult tended to enjoy more visibility and intensity than other

contemporary heroes. [173] When his figure overshadowed not only contemporaries but the ancient ideal of Brutus, I must conclude that Marat the mortal was being elevated to something altogether not human.

Perhaps the reports of the Cult of Marat as supernatural or literal sainthood are isolated or skewed by biased historiography, as Ozouf suggests. My research, however, indicates not only popular and ceremonial examples of apparent sanctification but artistic propaganda trending decisively toward a form of sanctification as well. Literary artists in particular sought to immortalize and deify their fellow wordsmith in Marat. Many poets and dramatists wrote about Marat or dedicated their works to the dead revolutionary. Comparisons to Christ prove more subtle in the tactile or visual renderings of Marat, but many hymns and poems not only compare Marat to Jesus but claim the former's moral superiority in at least one case. The song "La Mort du Patriote Marat" was quite popular and spread quickly, as did many other songs glorifying Marat as a martyr.[174]

The Staging of Martyrdom

> *Why are you interested in the theatre? Is it because the crimes give you pleasure, or because the authors cause you tears? Vain declamation! Take the voice of the spectators at a dramatic performance; do you think that their judgments are uniform, that all the spectators regard with the same eye the hero of the piece?*[175]
> —The hermit of Marat's *Polish Letters*

Marat's public life sometimes seemed more an exercise in gross theatrics than in substantive politics. Particularly during his time spent in the National Convention, Marat dramatized his actions because Parisian radicals frequently sent delegates to cheer their Montagnard heroes from the galleries. One Girondin even complained that his department had not sent him to the theatre to hear the dramatic "farces of a puppet like

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[173] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 103, 105, 116.
[174] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 187; Schama, *Citizens*, 745.
[175] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 116.

Marat."[176] Considering Marat in his life was such a dramatic and grotesque personality, it is not surprising that six successful stage productions depicting or inspired by Marat's death opened from 1793 until 1797. Most of the plays contrived to bring the hero back from the dead at the end, surrounded by characters representing Justice, Liberty, and Equality.[177] In the 1793 play, *The People's Friend, or The Death of Marat* by Gassier Saint-Amand, the Cult of Marat found a dramatic representation of popular feelings. In the final act, the actors representing the ideals of Liberty and Fame resurrect Marat in a shower of roses and crown the martyr before proclaiming to the audience that "Marat, whom you mourn, immortal forever, will this day share Brutus's glory."[178] Amand's play did not preach vengeance but peace. He staged the death as an act of sacrifice, not assassination, so that the myth of Marat might manage to "consolidate the happiness of the Republic..." Amand ended his play by pleading with the people for the proper reverence and unity befitting such a pious martyr: "We all lose a father, a friend. Let us pay to his memory the honors that are his due, and never forget that the hearts of all French people are the Pantheon where the people's friend must live on."[179] The Convention had voted for the Pantheon to entomb Marat's body in late 1793, so Amand seems to be suggesting that the memory of Marat should "live on" in the people's hearts. The de-fanging of Marat's violent, vengeful character to encourage but control the popular movements in his memory was a policy to some extent later adapted by the Jacobins in the Terror.

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[176] Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 282-283.
[177] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 11.
[178] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 125.
[179] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 78-79.

Another successful play produced in late 1793, *Marat in the Caves of the Cordeliers, or the Day of 10 August*, also returned to the theme of Marat representing a benevolent father in death. Its author, Citizen Mathelin, stated, "My sole aim was to bring back to life the memory of a man dear to the entire nation."[180] Mathelin focused on death and resurrection in the play. Marat's character kept himself in a "tomb," choosing to "bury himself alive" in the underground of a Cordelier-occupied monastery, where the criminal past of "robed charlatans" is implied to the audience. Marat emerges on August 10, 1792 to hail his revolution.[181] Mathelin's incrimination of Christianity in the name of Marat was also the practice of many Jacobins in their de-christianization campaigns throughout the Terror, although the policy was never official and leaders such as Robespierre opposed de-christianization.

A third play, also titled *La Mort de Marat*, was performed in early 1794. Evoked in this drama was Marat's commitment to vigilance: "Eternalize the fires of your patriotism in us, live again for your country, and watch over her still."[182] The themes of suspicion and vigilance here mirrored the Jacobin action of passing the Law of Suspects in September 1793. All three major plays thus show the Marat-related connection between the art and the politics of the day: on themes of vigilance, control and cultivation of popular fervor, and demonization of the Church. Yet no work was a greater nexus between official and unofficial commemoration of Marat than David's *Marat Assassinated.*

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[180] Mathelin, introduction to *Marat in the Caves of the Cordeliers, or the Day of 10 August*, quoted in *Rehearsing the Revolution*, Huet, 80.
[181] Mathelin, *Marat in the Caves*, in Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 80.
[182] *La Mort de Marat*, in Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 81-82.

Crucified on Canvas

> *The Persians, Medes, Parthians, Greeks and Romans prostrated themselves at the feet of idols, and each adored a sort of factitious God, and among them the sage himself sought his god in the fold of the priest. Cast a glance at modern nations, and you will there see the same ignorance, the same idolatry... You will there see whole nations offering incense to devils...*[183]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

I already pointed out that David re-launched the Cult of Marat in theatrical fashion with an elaborate funeral procession. Yet in many ways, David also consistently made himself the Cult of Marat's most important apostle. He produced the most famous icon of the Cult of Marat—the masterpiece painting, *Marat Assassinated*, which he finished in October 1793. The morning after Marat's death, a representative of the *Contrat-Social* section pointed out the Le Peletier martyr portrait hanging in the hall and said to David, "where are you; take up your brush, there remains one more painting for you to make."[184] Another deputy urged David, "[r]eturn Marat to us whole again."[185] David intended the Marat painting to hang behind the speaker's rostrum in the National Convention hall, so that it might inspire the people's representatives in their patriotic duties of leadership. David sought to paint Marat's martyrdom not just to honor Marat as a personal hero but also to inspire the people and to jolt them to into patriotic unity.

David actually visited Marat the day before his death, and was "stunned" to see him so consumed with disease yet working austerely nonetheless—an image of endurance, sacrifice and patriotic duty which was to come through also in *Marat Assassinated*, where the martyr still grips his pen in his last breath. Despite the true representation of Marat's working unto death (although not necessarily holding a pen),

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[183] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 89.
[184] Schama, *Citizens*, 742.
[185] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 6, 12, 2.

David took artistic license to eliminate many details of the room such as a pair of pistols over a map of France—perhaps a better metaphor for Marat's politics of death than what David actually chose to include. Another fact obscured by David was Marat's skin disease, which disfigured his face. David chose to tilt Marat's head in the painting, thereby not only showing Marat to be at his last breath but also preventing the viewer from observing Marat's features at a proper angle, which served to avoid the hideousness of a realistic drawing. Yet the tilted head also distorts our perspective enough to avoid the perception of too blatant an idealization.[186] Although Marat was fifty—and by every account ugly—when he died, David chose to idealize him not only through his saintly pose and his patriotic work-till-death scene but also in sheer appearance. He appears young and angelically beautiful, smiling slightly in his last breath.[187] In real life, Marat had a bony face, a big nose, and a black beard—quite unlike the angelic youth in Marat's painting seen on the following page.[188]

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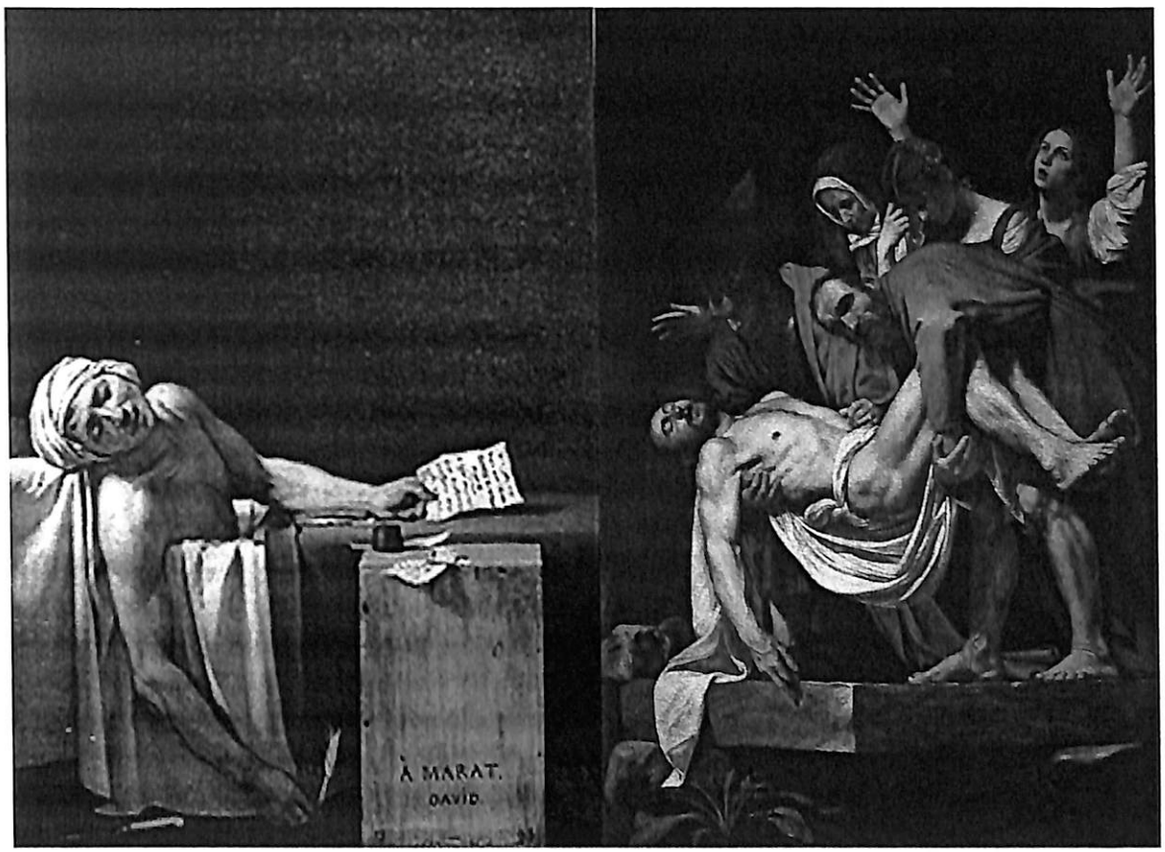
[186] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 4-5, 14.
[187] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 125.
[188] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 50.



Marat Assassinated by Jacques-Louis David[189] and Caravaggio's *Deposition*[190]

In Marat's left hand, he clutches a note from Corday promising to name traitors. On the makeshift table a note next to a banknote implores the reader to give the banknote to the widowed "mother of five children whose husband died for the *patrie*." The pen remaining in his right hand's grip, despite this being his dying moment, suggests that he continues forever to be "The Friend of the People." It seemed David returned Marat more than just whole. In *Marat Assassinated*, David transformed the martyr from ugly radical at politics' fringe to saintly revolutionary at the heart of the new republican mythos. The bleak background hovering over half the painting hints that there is no

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[189] American Social History Productions, Inc., "The Death of Marat," *Liberty Equality Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/631/html.

[190] Emil Kren, Daniel Marx, *Web Gallery of Art*, Caravaggio's "The Entombment," http://www.wga.hu/support/viewer/z.html.

afterlife—a suggestion consistent with the Jacobin de-christianization campaign. The background, however, brightens as one pans over to the right, suggesting a better or more enlightened future of patriotic harmony.[191] Despite the implication of no afterlife, the style of the painting belongs to a tradition of how to depict martyred saints, which places the work ironically in the religious paintings genre.[192] Antonio Pinelli suggests that David's painting is indicative of the propaganda techniques of the Jacobins—namely a "veiled Christianity" to generate enthusiasm from the superstitious masses. David had traveled to Italy and had seen works like Caravaggio's *Deposition* and Caccacio Bandinelli's *Pietà*. Both depictions of Christ martyred, the former a painting and the latter a sculpture, seem likely inspirations for the positioning of Marat's body in David's painting. The bloody knife depicted in David's work also fits the tradition of Christian iconography showing the torture of Jesus during the Passion.[193] Schama suggests David meant to depict Marat as "the new Jesus, the Man of the People."[194] Both the eternally dissolving back wall and the obstructing crate suggest Marat is one of the people and transcendent of people—somehow in communion with the viewer and yet at the same time separate due to his ideal virtues. Befitting a martyr, the subtle trick of dubious spatial properties in the painting forces the viewer to simultaneously look down at Marat and straight into his face—to pity his condition yet respect his sacrifice.[195] The sheer starkness of *Marat Assassinated*, as opposed to the detailed portraits presenting the

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[191] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 126-127.
[192] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 14.
[193] Antonio Pinelli, *David* (Milan: 5 Continents, c2004), 28, 29.
[194] Schama, *Power of Art*, 223.
[195] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 15-16.

bourgeois life in David's later career, at once represents the austerity of the radical republican and the religious icon.[196]

Thomas Crow, in fact, claims the painting to be carefully, cynically crafted Jacobin propaganda. The painting, he writes, represents but a part of the Marat cult that the Jacobins tried to exploit. He goes on to note that David's painting pacifies or domesticates Marat, transforming him into an icon empty of his former controversial ideas and hateful character. Tom Gretton shares the view of a manipulative anti-sans-culottes David. He claims the painting "makes history as well as being made by it."[197] Gretton emphasizes the fine political line to which David the artist had to adhere—to create a public symbol that would offer legitimacy to Marat as a martyr and a popular hero yet would also pacify Marat's street mobs, rather than galvanize them, which an image crying out for vengeance or even vigilance would have done. Gretton claims that David's painting "hushes" the popular movement by softening Marat and trapping his figure in the depths of a gridded space. He claims that because the painting is ordered so harmoniously, composed of horizontal and vertical lines all parallel with the four sides of the picture itself; and because the scene is without evident movement such as a wrinkle in the bathwater or a sign of the assassin fleeing, David was essentially silencing and ordering Marat—and by extension, silencing and ordering the People. Gretton suggests the folded green cloth at his side represents a repressed blade of violence.[198] Vaughn and Weston seem to agree with Gretton that the choice of a green cloth makes for a docile image.[199] Yet all three seem to overlook an obvious historical fact, for green became the

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[196] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat,* 23.
[197] Gretton quoted in Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat,* 23, 25.
[198] Gretton, "Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, David," in *David's Marat*, 43, 44, 49-51.
[199] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 16.

counterrevolution's official color and was prohibited when it was discovered that Charlotte Corday wore green ribbons in her hat when she killed Marat.[200] One can make the case that the green quasi-dagger is not a force of repression but an incitement to vengeance.

Instead of focusing on the docile aspects of the painting, Miller emphasizes the blood—especially how it covers most every light surface, from Marat's chest to his sheet and the assassin's letter.[201] Such attention to include blood on every article seems not to silence Marat but rather to incite the viewer to avenge him. Essentially, while certain Jacobins such as Robespierre certainly intended to suppress or control the specter of Marat, David was not one of them. His later work, *Triumph of the French People*, discussed at length below, further supports this point. Only later in David's career did he turn his back on his friend Marat and the cult he helped create in his honor.

Before unveiling his work, David admitted the public to his studio, and hosted a great feast provided by the *Section du Muséum*. Then, in proper fashion befitting a people's hero, the painting was paraded through the streets to the Louvre Section. There the premier Salon of the Republic showcased the painting.[202] David unveiled *Marat Assassinated* in the Louvre's courtyard, and all in attendance recited oaths of loyalty to the Revolution with David adding: "Our enemies, vanquished by arms, will also be vanquished by the arts..."[203] In addition to their oaths vowing to die for the *patrie*, the crowd sang radical patriotic hymns.[204] After the exhibitions, David presented his *Marat*

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[200] Schama, *Citizens*, 735.
[201] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 125. Schama also mentions how the blood covers the knife and fills the tub. Schama, *Citizens*, 746.
[202] Schama, *Citizens*, 746.
[203] David quoted in *Three Deaths*, Miller, 127.
[204] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 101.

Assassinated to the National Convention on November 14, 1793.[205] David said to the Convention, "The people wanted their friend back, its sad voice could be heard, it prompted me to paint, it wished to see again the features of its faithful friend... I heard the voice of the people, I obeyed."[206] Therefore, David felt it was his job to help the people resurrect their martyr. The exception to the Jacobin rule, David really did reflect and encourage the popular Cult of Marat, while the rest of the Jacobins seemed more intent on stifling it.

The following May, the National Convention decreed that copies of the painting be reproduced at the Gobelin factory under the supervision of David.[207] Initially, 500 color and 500 black and white copies of *Marat Assassinated* were printed with dozens more engravers receiving subsequent orders.[208] In 1794, David worked on another project glorifying Marat—a curtain design for the opera depicting *The Triumph of the French People*. Never finished, the curtain would have shown a martyrs' procession behind a "people's chariot," a procession which is cut off by Marat, who lurches out of line, toward the viewer, to show his chest wound and plead for vengeance. With the fall of Robespierre, both David and the curtain project were arrested. While David was eventually released, politics shifted so as to make it undesirable or impossible for him to finish *The Triumph of the French People.*[209]

Most commemorations discussed thus far simply hold symbolic value, rather than primary substance of Marat's ideas. It seemed his legacy was mainly to become either a tool of Jacobin control or simply a feel-good inspiration for the people. But the Cult of

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[205] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 13.
[206] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 28.
[207] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 13.
[208] Monneret, *David and Neo-Classicism*, 112.
[209] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 13-14.

Marat also sparked a renewed interest in Marat's own writings, as shown by the Paris Commune August 14, 1793 meeting during which someone motioned that *Chains of Slavery* be distributed to primary assemblies as a guidebook to defeating despots. Various journalists and claimants to Marat's mantle,[210] including Jacques Roux, also sought to continue publishing the *Friend of the People.*[211] But such ideas for the dissemination of Marat's writings soon came into conflict with Jacobin goals.

The artistic representations of Marat's life, death, and resurrection arose not only from artists' vision but public sentiment as well, as demonstrated by the popular success of the works and the artists' admitted political goals. Public sentiment strongly favored the Cult of Marat and its supposed justifications of the Terror that was to be carried out in his name. On November 17, 1793, The William Tell section of Paris petitioned the National Convention, "congratulat[ing]" the convention for dictating "fear and terror as the great order of the day." The section added that such measures represented the "two most powerful levers of revolutionaries" to bring to justice a "hecatomb of traitors" and please the spirits of the "glorious martyrs of liberty"—with Marat mentioned specifically.[212] Because of such popular pressure, politicians acted in collusion with the Cult of Marat.

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[210] See St. Just quote on page 46 of this thesis.
[211] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 187.
[212] Sagan, *Citizens and Cannibals*, 344.

CHAPTER 3

The Cult of Marat: The Political Sect

> *[W]e know how the Christian religions originated. Constantine established Christianity in the great countries under the Roman empire, Clovis did so in Gaul, Charlemagne in Germany, Hermenigilda in Spain, Wieceslav in Poland, the emperor Basil in Russia.*[213]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

The above statement resonated in Marat's writings throughout his career. In *Chains of Slavery*, he noted that various princes and governments published their laws under the name of a deity, from Zoroaster under Oromasis to Minos under Jupiter and for Lycurgus, Apollo.[214] Marat was skeptical of religion in general. While he believed state religious sects could unify the population and provide social services, more often than not he felt that religion was used by the state to oppress the people. The irony was plain to see when, particularly in the latter half of 1793, the leaders of the Revolution were captives to the Cult of Marat's popular movement—and so necessarily found "ways of making virtues out of necessities."[215] The Jacobins incorporated popular symbols like Marat and formulated new official ones like the goddess Liberty in a dual attempt to control the nature and intensity of the popular festivals.[216]

The new revolutionary state had four broad goals: the return of traditional practices of economic regulation; a mobilization of military resources on a mass scale;

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[213] Marat, *Polish Letters,* Vol II, 94.
[214] Marat, *Chains of Slavery*, 113.
[215] Gretton, "Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, David," *David's Marat*, 42.
[216] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 61.

the reallocation to state organs of the powers of punitive violence or terror; and the corralling of spontaneous politics into an official program of state ideology.[217] Marat would have approved of the first goal, as it included social welfare programs. But the wartime mobilization always encountered opposition from Marat on the grounds that its burdens fell upon the poor, and it left the nation in a vulnerable state that was ripe for royalist intrigues and the suppression of liberties. In 1790, he wrote that war represented "the sole resort still left to our counterrevolutionary officials and agents to put us in chains."[218] Marat actually is proved correct if one considers that the rights guaranteed by the new Jacobin Constitution of 1793—including freedom of expression and the "sacred" right to popular insurrection[219]—were suspended due to the need to enforce wartime security and unity. His preconditions for mobilization and war were for the nation to arm every citizen at the nation's expense and for an emergency triumvirate to be elected to share wartime powers and promptly relinquish the power when the enemy was dead.[220] Marat's prescriptions for war were not followed, however, and probably for the same reason that the government no more wanted sans-culottes with weapons than they wanted sans-culottes with printing presses. The result could likely devolve into anarchy. The suppression of grassroots politics—particularly movements inspired by Marat—in favor of a rigid state-filtered public opinion likely would have infuriated Marat the most, as he himself had suffered persecution and exile so many times for expressing himself. Marat

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[217] Schama, *Citizens*, 755-756.
[218] Marat, "Are We Undone," *Writings of Marat*, 37.
[219] J.M. Collot D'Herbois, Jacobin Pres., Decreed, "Declaration of Rights" (From Jacobin Constitution of 1793), in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 76, 79.
[220] Jean-Paul Marat, "Marat, the People's Friend, to the Brave Parisians," Poster on Walls of Paris, 1792 August 26, in *Writings of Marat*, 50.

favored the establishment of state organs of punitive violence, however, so the Terror was in line with Marat's own ideal government in at least that one respect.

The exploitation of Marat's death gave greater impetus, urgency, and enthusiasm to the Terror.[221] In life, Marat often proved too unstable and too radical for helping the Jacobins implement programs and consolidate power over their enemies. In death, however, the Jacobins valued the symbol of Marat as one of their greatest revolutionary assets against their enemies and for their programs. The Jacobins suggested that Marat's assassination amounted to part of a vast conspiracy, which could only be thwarted if France transformed itself radically—with the elimination of the Church's power and the expansion of the state's.[222] Despite Jacobin rhetoric, much of the conspiring was committed by the Jacobins, as Corday had plotted alone. While indeed there existed a counterrevolutionary conspiracy, a real Jacobin conspiracy began after Marat's death. The Mountain sought to exploit Marat's murder, retroactively suggesting their own vindication for the execution of several leading Girondists in the month before Corday ever drew Marat's blood.[223] Jacobin politicians then exploited Marat's murder and works to justify the policies of the Terror, many policies which the authorities enacted within a month of Marat's death.[224] First, Robespierre sought to use the pretext of Marat's death to accelerate the dismantling of his Girondin opposition.[225] In order to promote the conspiracy theory, at the top of the list of enemies to be executed was the assassin of Marat. The Terror acted swiftly to guillotine Charlotte Corday and round up her fellow

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[221] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 190.
[222] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 124, 127.
[223] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 98.
[224] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 189.
[225] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 142.

Girondins—vigilant and vengeful policies Marat likely would have supported.[226] For further targeting of internal enemies, the Jacobins passed the "Law of Suspects" on September 17, 1793.[227] Marat would have favored the posthumously passed law because it also allowed execution of monopolists and profiteers of food. Various laws also made disruptions of patriotic societies a major offense. Additionally, the Jacobins instituted a power-consolidating process of confiscating property and arresting foreigners. Paris closed its gates, and authorities arrested many people following accusations of being aristocrats.[228] While many of these measures were passed supposedly out of revenge for Marat's assassination, the Jacobins used the cult not only for popular galvanizing but also to spite and intimidate their enemies.[229]

Another dimension of explanation for government patronage of the Cult of Marat includes the dire crises facing the Revolution in the late spring and early summer of 1793. The revolutionary army had lost ground, and the problem of domestic dissent resulted in a need for greater unity. The Revolution needed symbols to rally the people because Lyon had been seized by counter-revolutionaries and the Vendée started taking up arms as well. Additionally, beginning in August 1793, national mobilization made the need for rallying symbols all the more crucial.[230] Halbwachs suggests that every church—or or otherwise institution of orthodoxy—must decide if a new cult clashes with or fortifies its central truths. Just as much as the church might gain in blessing the cult, it could also lose by condemning it.[231] While the Jacobins wanted to encourage national enthusiasm,

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[226] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 189.
[227] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 124.
[228] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 189-190.
[229] Schama, *Power of Art*, 221.
[230] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 98.
[231] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 112.

it was of absolute necessity from their perspective that the enthusiasm be represented uniformly and orderly by official channels of participation. That necessitated the end for popular politics.

The End of Popular Politics

> *Leave the vile politicians to found on the will of the gods the rights which princes arrogate to themselves; to make disobedience on the part of the people a crime, also to prevent them from discussing the rights of the powerful, from throwing light on their conduct, and from judging them.*[232]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

To call Marat a father of the Terror overlooks aspects of the Jacobin government that Marat would have criticized heavily. The Jacobin authorities, indeed, arrested Marat's enemies and even released many of his allies from prison in February 1794.[233] Yet the sans-culottes were not to inherit political power from Marat's martyrdom. Halbwachs' theories on religious memory predict this pattern. He notes that mystics are sometimes incorporated into orthodox dogma but never given prominent positions within its church.[234] The Jacobin Club ultimately used Marat's assassination to consolidate power for its own Committee of Public Safety.[235] After stripping down and restructuring the Committee of Public Safety, the committee transformed into the most centralized organ of state authority France had yet experienced.[236] Thus, a few months after Marat's death anarchy ceased and the dictatorship started.[237] Just as politics ended for patriotism to truly triumph, as many Jacobins argued, the militant state granted itself absolute

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[232] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 142.
[233] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 187.
[234] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 116.
[235] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 241.
[236] Schama, *Citizens*, 755.
[237] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror,* 241.

priority over democratic interests for popular participation and political free expression.[238]

Part of the silencing of free expression involved the unofficial de-christianization campaign, which in some instances led to promotion of a Cult of Marat to fill the void left by the vacant saints and rites of Catholicism.[239] The "sacralization" of Marat proved to be a potent instrument of propaganda for the Revolution. As busts of Marat replaced the statues of saints, Jacobin zealots attacked, closed, or commandeered churches. Parisians even renamed Notre-Dame the Temple of Reason.[240] This civic religion of reason and patriotism, as embodied chiefly by the Cult of the Supreme Being, was often conflated by some Jacobins with the Cult of Marat in order to cast a wider net in galvanizing the people to abandon Catholicism. For instance, a radical Jacobin named Monet sought to eradicate not only Catholics but Jews and Protestants from Strasbourg. During Strasbourg's Feast of Reason on 30 Brumaire, the procession to its Temple of Reason carried with it a bust of Marat.[241] Marat, therefore, came to be seen in many places as physically replacing the symbols of the old religion. For instance, his effigies replaced the miraculous saints' images in processions, and on the rue aux Ours, Marat's bust replaced the statue of the Virgin Mary.[242] Yet the unofficial persecution and replacement of Christianity continued to be a regionally mixed phenomenon. In some places, Catholics practiced as they always had, while in others they were intensely persecuted. The Cult of Marat, like the persecution of Catholicism, was also a regionally mixed phenomenon. In some de-christianized areas, Temples of Reason ascribed to the

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[238] Schama, *Citizens*, 755.
[239] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 124.
[240] Schama, *Citizens*, 745; Miller, *Three Deaths*, 125.
[241] Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*, 187-188.
[242] Pinelli, *David*, 29. Schama, *Citizens*, 745.

religion of Supreme Being deism, while other areas used the temples primarily to venerate a character like Marat to the point of sainthood. It is important to note that Robespierre himself claimed to be against de-christianization on the grounds that it seemed to him to be a foreign plot intended to undermine morals and defame the Revolution. In addition, the national government never outlawed Christianity nor did it officially endorse persecution. The de-christianization campaigns were orchestrated, however, by members of the Jacobin club and the Paris commune—two very influential institutions in granting Robespierre his power during the Terror.[243]

Beyond the question of causality wherein we judge Marat as the father of the Terror or not, the question remains as to whether Marat intended for the *kind* of Terror the Jacobins officially and unofficialy carried out during their rule. Are the policies of Terror, carried out in the name of Marat, consistent with what Marat stood for and spoke out against? If so, would that truly make him a father of the Terror? If all of these conditions are ultimately assumed, has history since the French Revolution judged him fairly?

The most damning evidence implicating Marat in the Terror is the *Friend of the People*. In his newspaper, Marat disseminated his worldview of conspiracies and invented a lexicon of Terror.[244] At least in this one aspect, one may judge him fairly as a legitimate cause of the kind of Terror ultimately instituted. For the Terror as a violent political phenomenon that relied so much upon the language of denunciation, Marat's forte, the demagogic journalist contributed to establishing much of the linguistic connections between the Jacobins and the people they sought to incite, intimidate,

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[243] Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*, 325, 117, 118.
[244] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 127.

control, or kill. The Jacobins that inherited Marat's language of lopping off heads actually put the language into action, satiating the angry urban mobs who had already been primed by Marat for years to watched heads roll by the hundreds and thousands. Beyond the question of Marat's exploitation as a symbol, for which he had no control of, Marat was implicated in the crime of the Terror by the exploitation of the symbols he himself created and perpetuated—symbols of violent justice, involving the arrest and execution of multitudes of real and imagined traitors. Yet aside from inheriting the lethal tools of Marat's demagogic trade and building the Terror from them, the actual policies and practices of Jacobins during their rule remain an ambivalent mix in regards to their congruence to Marat's professed ideas.

Returning to the de-christianization aspect of the Terror, in determining how Marat felt about religion, one must refer primarily to *Chains of Sla*very (1774). In that work, Marat wrote "all religions support despotism; I don't know of any that favors despotism more than Christianity."[245] Early on, Marat favored religious tolerance, but he felt there should only be one religious sect, and the state and political organization should administer such a sect.[246] Besides the contradiction between the two ideas of tolerance and exclusivity, another irony proved to be radical patriotism's predominance as the official religion of the state in the years of the Terror. Since the Cult of Marat was a significant aspect of Jacobin civil religion, Marat's approval of state religions and his ultimate exploitation as part of one seems to link him in a superficial way.

In addition to promoting a state religion, more evidence suggests Marat would have supported the de-christianization campaign of the Jacobins during the Terror. For

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[245] Marat, *Chains of Slavery*, 1774, quoted in Miller, *Three Deaths*, 127.
[246] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 14.

instance, when Louis XVI refused to sanction the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, Marat suggested the king was "the chief of the conspirators against the country."[247] In a 1790 article of *L'Ami du Peuple*, Marat suggested that the proper function of the estates of the clergy should be "liberating and aiding the people."[248] Marat favored religious tolerance only inasmuch as it did not undermine the welfare of the people or the sovereignty of the state—a sovereignty which some felt the Catholic Church had violated with its unhealthy ties to Rome.

At least in regards to religion, the evidence of Marat's posthumous approval seems to link him by way of some intent but not causality. Some point out that Marat essentially helped initiate the Terror before his assassination, as he helped galvanize the mobs that eventually caused the overthrow of the Girondins on June 2, 1793.[249] The mobs led by Marat soon thereafter lost their usefulness to the Jacobins, however. After using the people-power of clubs and sections to expel the Girondins and win control of the Revolution, the people proved a growing problem for the Jacobins.[250] The conflicts between bourgeois Jacobins and petty bourgeois sans-culottes caused the rift. Marat wrote in a July 1792 number of his journal that the Revolution had been made by the "submerged class" only to be exploited in the interests of "petty landed proprietors and the clique of barristers."[251] At the time Marat probably meant the Girondists were exploiting the revolutionary gains of the lower classes, but a similar rift of affinity and fortunes seemed to be occurring in the later phase of the Revolution between the sans-

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[247] Marat quoted in Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 74.
[248] Jean-Paul Marat, "A Fair Dream and a Rude Awakening," *L'Ami du Peuple*, August 25, 1790, in *Writings of Marat*, 38.
[249] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 12.
[250] Gretton, "Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*, David," in *David's Marat*, 41.
[251] Jean-Paul Marat, "Nothing Has Changed!" *L'Ami du Peuple*, No 667, July, 1792, in *Writings of Marat*, 42-43.

culottes and the Jacobin mainstream. Because of this dually intractable cultural divide between the ultra-rational Robespierre and the somewhat grotesque and farcical politics of Marat the Revolution necessitated making a choice to ensure its own survival: either become more popular or become more professional.[252]

As both the civil war and the war against the European powers began to go well in the spring of 1794, the Jacobins felt it necessary to consolidate gains and security by terrorizing the popular movement's leaders.[253] Not only would Marat have been against this, as he himself was targeted and suppressed many times by the Girondists. He would have been against the war under which conditions it was made necessary, for Marat was opposed to declaring war against England from the very beginning and opposed war with Prussia and Austria after that. Marat was also against mass conscription policies.[254] Yet war and targeting of popular movements' leaders were not the only two maxims of Marat the Jacobins defied.

Marat himself probably considered government edification by symbols a good thing if it resulted in what he considered greater liberty. In a letter to Desmoulins in 1790, Marat wrote, "nothing is more important for a victory of Liberty, for the happiness of the Nation, than to enlighten the citizens as to their rights, and to create a public opinion."[255] In many instances, however, the government of the Terror sought to exploit yet control the public opinion and effervescent fervor of the people enraptured by the Cult of Marat. Halbwachs states that any time a church canonizes a new saint, "original

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[252] Gretton, "Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*," 41-42.
[253] Gretton, "Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*," 42.
[254] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 83, 91, 102.
[255] Marat, "Marat to Desmoulins," 1790 June 24, *Writings of Marat*, 63.

traits" of the cult are oftentimes gutted from the new sanctified version.[256] That process is evident in the Jacobins act of curbing citizen rights that Marat would have considered sacred. For instance, Robespierre suppressed the publication of a complete works of Marat for fear that such a volume might undermine Jacobin rule. When elements even more radical than Marat continued publishing the *Friend of the People,* Simmone Evrard believed them to be sullying Marat's memory.[257] Some historians have made the assumption that the Jacobins cynically used Marat's common-law wife, Evrard, to discredit and eliminate their political opposition in the enragés movement.[258] The irony of censorship lay not only in Marat's opposition to it but in Robespierre's once purported opposition to censorship as well. In a November 1792 letter to his constituents, Robespierre spoke out against the "monopoly of the press" by the Girondist Ministry:

> Our government is not content with sharing in the task of instructing public opinion, but they reserve it as an exclusive privilege to themselves, and persecute all who venture to enter the lists against them. Hence the laws against complete liberty of the press—laws said to be justified by the pretext of 'public interest.'[259]

Yet, because Marat's writings might have inspired people to question some of the Jacobin policies and also included justification for violent revolts against government by its people, Robespierre broke with his commitment to free press, and censored and gutted all of Marat's theories, leaving only his vague symbol as suitable for public consumption. Robespierre intuitively knew of what Halbwachs suggests: to ensure success, a cult needs a sole founder and many followers.[260] Robespierre not only foiled Marat's cult by

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[256] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 112.
[257] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 187-188.
[258] Schama, *Citizens*, 745.
[259] Maximillien Robespierre, "Maximillien Robespierre on the Monopoly of the Press," Letter to Constituents, No. VI, 1792 November, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 38-39.
[260] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 112.

suppressing the most "Maratiste" aspects of it.[261] He also destroyed the ultimate chances of its success by adopting and gutting its symbols and thereby dividing the founding of the cult between Jacobin authorities like himself and what would have been a more faithful legacy of Marat.

Beyond rejecting all of Marat's substance and leaving only his symbol, Robespierre basically wished the cult away. He appreciated what Marat once meant to the common people. Yet when Marat died, Robespierre's policy was not to honor Marat's real legacy but to exploit his death to eliminate the Girondist opposition and to promote the abstract concepts of Virtue and Liberty.[262] Superstitious cult worship for a dead man, especially one so controversial, seemed to Robespierre to be a distraction from the real purpose and message of the Revolution. The Revolution needed saints only if such saints helped people find the way to abstract civic virtues. If the people acted more interested in the saint himself, or worse, in perpetuating the radical saint's ideas, then Robespierre seemed ready to disavow any ties to the popular cult. If the threat of the cult was not too grave, however, Robespierre would compromise and try to exploit the cult to his own ends.

What Marat's complete works or the continuation of his newspaper represented for mainstream Jacobins were the equivalents of political heresy. Halbwachs makes the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy without suggesting any difference in the date of origin. More often it is different interpretations of the same past, of the same events, but with a marked difference of separated social memories. Sometimes mystics or heretics insist upon reviving a text that was rejected or neglected by orthodoxy. If the

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[261] Desmoulins' sarcastically repeated "Maratiste," which was the epithet the Brissotins called the Montagnards of the National Convention. Desmoulins, "Gironde Foxes," *Great Jacobins*, 34.
[262] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 6, 13.

orthodoxy considers such interpretations or texts not too controversial, then the new movement is integrated into the old and simply considered the benevolent work of mystics. If, however, the works or interpretations transferred from the past are too contradictory to orthodox doctrine or authority, then the movement is branded a heresy. For most heretical or mystical movements, there is a feeling already manifested that seeks validation in the revival of the old texts. In essence, Marat's writings and his newspaper might have simply been a symbol for the kind of radicalism the enragés movement wanted to bring back and Robespierre wanted to crush once and for all. Halbwachs states that Mystics in some instances detach their attention from the "exterior forms of the cult" in order to discover a "transcendent substance" outside of time that is not concretely tied to the past but rather accessible in the present without physical manifestations. That particular definition of a mystic fits the enragés leaders who wanted to continue Marat's newspaper better than it does the would-be publishers of the complete works of Marat. If the enragés ultra-radicals parallel a mystical movement of radical heresies, then the Jacobins of the Terror fit the profile of archetypal dogmatists who seek "meaning primarily on the outside, in the decisions or interpretations of the Fathers, popes, and councils."[263] It is easy to see how such an intractable divide on the meanings of the Cult of Marat led to mutual frustration between elites like Robespierre and the popular social movements sometimes instigated by the most radical political actors.

Jacobin leaders in general felt increasing anxiety about the large scale of the numerous ceremonies to commemorate Marat in Paris during 1793. After the remains of Marat were voted to be placed in the Pantheon on November 14, 1793, Robespierre

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[263] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* 94, 106, 107, 104, 100.

moved for the cessation of the commemorative ceremonies.[264] Robespierre ultimately believed that popular societies and their commemorations of Marat only masqueraded as patriotic celebrations of the people. In reality, Robespierre suggested, the popular commemorations were the work of foreign agents trying to push the Revolution into excesses and so trying to discredit its accomplishments.[265]

Perhaps even more telling than Robespierre contradicting himself on freedom of the press is his contradiction of previous ideas on freedom of religion. After Marat's death and at the height of his cult-hood, Robespierre spoke about Christianity in such a way that it would be easy to substitute the Cult of Marat into his general ideas on the place of religious expression in society. "Fanaticism," Robespierre stated in a speech to the Jacobin Club, "is a capricious and ferocious monster that flies before calm reason," but let the "harmless" zealots "bring to the altar of their country the superfluous pomps and trophies of superstition," because "country and reason alike will smile at these [harmless] offerings."[266] Robespierre leaves a loophole for suppression of superstition, however. "[T]he troubling of public order" was the condition that justified religious censorship. Robespierre imagined such subversion was occurring with the danger of a popular, divisive, and disruptive Cult of Marat. By 1794, he grew so frustrated that he presented his own alternative to the Cult of Marat with the Cult of the Supreme Being.[267] Robespierre even enlisted the talents of David in June, 1794 for the Festival of the

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[264] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 17.
[265] Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*, 120-121.
[266] Maximillien Robespierre, Robespierre's Faith Speeches at the Jacobin Club, 1792 March; 1793 November, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 30-31.
[267] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 17.

Supreme Being, which sought to celebrate deism and to integrate—and perhaps thus eliminate—all disparate movements of the Revolution.[268]

Despite the Jacobins' cynical exploitation of the Cult of Marat for their own ends, not to mention the stumbling state religion of the Cult of the Supreme Being, Robespierre actually stated his opposition to religious suppression and religious establishment by the state: "The Convention is no creed-maker, no deviser of metaphysical systems..."[269] Yet he also praised the virtue of building the "empire of laws on the empire of morals," as "lawgivers of antiquity" accomplished with religion.[270] Robespierre ultimately failed to halt the Cult of Marat, but his push to suppress the movement marked the start of a process that was to continue after his own death—with the reaction of Thermidor.[271] Robespierre once stated that "So long as tyrants exist, this [religious] faith will be the consolation of the oppressed."[272] Robespierre was right, but what he did not anticipate was that "tyrants" and "faith" swapped places in the course of the Terror and its reaction. When the tyrants were Royalists and Catholics, Marat was the faith of the people. But when the Terror for which Marat was the symbol became the tyrant, the people reverted to the consolation of the old religion and sought to stamp out the Cult of Marat.

Cult of Marat in the Last Days: Pantheonization

> *But is the soul immortal? As to that I am also ignorant. All that I know about it is that it is not so by its nature; for everything which has received being may also, in like manner, lose it.*[273]
> *I was by temperament the friend of men: I became their enemy by misfortune.*[274]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

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[268] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 111.
[269] Robespierre, Faith Speeches, in *Great Jacobins*, 31-32.
[270] Maximillien Robespierre, "Maximillien Robespierre on Church and State," Letter to Constituents, 1792 December, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 51.
[271] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 17.
[272] Robespierre, Faith Speeches, in *Great Jacobins*, 32-33.
[273] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 37.
[274] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 101.

For a brief stint following the overthrow of Robespierre on July 27, 1794 and the establishment of a Thermidorian reaction, Marat remained an influential symbol. During the reaction, on September 21, 1794, Marat's corpse received the honors of the Pantheon—a national hall of fame and glory—and took the spot occupied by Mirabeau's corpse, all of which had been decided in a November 1793 vote.[275] It is not clear why Pantheonization occurred after Thermidor, but we do know that before Robespierre himself had been executed, he had sought to end all Cult of Marat ceremonies after the measure passed that ensured the honors of the Pantheon for Marat. Perhaps, then, the reactionary government allowed one last ceremony for Marat to further dishonor Robespierre's own legacy. Palmer claims the move was more a slap in the face to conservatives who thought their moment of even deeper reaction had come. Palmer states that the convention ordered that Marat's remains receive Pantheonization to show conservatives that the moderates were not fully ready to relinquish the punitive powers of state terror. Indicative of the nuances of post-Terror politics, one man moved for Robespierre's arrest and just a few months later favored Pantheonization for the one he called the "profound Marat."[276]

Ozouf suggests Marat's Pantheonization functioned more as a celebration of the military victories of the Republic and of fraternity in general. She admits that the procession employed many Marat-specific emblems, but she rejects the idea that the festival was mainly about Marat.[277] On the one hand, her analysis makes sense given that Marat's politics had certainly fallen out of fashion. On the other hand, it would make

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[275] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 190-191.
[276] Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*, 383.
[277] Ozouf, *Festivals*, 119.

sense for the cult to continue a few months after Thermidor given that Marat's symbol had already been divested of much political substance by the Jacobins. Therefore, lacking in a new set of symbols and heroes but seeking to celebrate their recent victories, the new government authorized Marat's Pantheonization perhaps in an attempt to harness some of the power of the mythologies already exploited by the Jacobins. Yet Ozouf points out that the convention was not represented in an official capacity during the ceremony.[278] Still, as in the days of Jacobin control, the members of the moderate government regulated every detail of the Pantheon procession, from costumes worn to the route walked and hymns sung.[279] Thermidor was still finding its bearings, and perhaps many thought a shortcut to consolidating gains was to recycle symbols of the past to represent the victories of the present. Yet they did not want to take a chance on anything resembling a Marat-inspired uprising, so they micromanaged the ceremony to keep its tone moderate and not divisive.

Formerly the Church of Sainte-Gèneviève, the Pantheon seemed an appropriate place to seal the legacy of a sanctified radical. A herald at the Temple's door even decreed the "Palms of Immortality" upon Marat.[280] Yet the truth is that the Pantheonization proved neither politically nor personally appropriate for Marat. David reportedly stated, "Let vice and imposture flee the Pantheon," for the "people have summoned to this place one man who was never mistaken."[281] Nevertheless, all were mistaken in hastily replacing Mirabeu's tomb with Marat's. At the time of Mirabeau's Pantheonization, Marat explicitly rejected the honor for himself, stating "if ever the

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[278] Ozouf, *Festivals*, 119.
[279] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 191.
[280] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 77.
[281] David quoted in "Pantheon," *Realms of Memory* Vol III, Ozouf, 340.

legislators.... should be induced to decree me a place in Ste. Gènèvieve, I here loudly protest against such indignity."[282] Marat felt, on the one hand, that the National Assembly had cynically used Mirabeau's death and Pantheonization for its own political advantage—a prescient charge after considering the political exploitation of Marat's own death.[283] Marat also rejected the process of Pantheonization on principle, referring to it as a "ridiculous spectacle of an assembly of vile and inept lowlifes setting themselves up as judges of immortality" when the assembly is "stupid" to think that the "present generation, much less the future races of mankind, will subscribe to their pronouncements."[284] Again, even in death, Marat proved savvier than the political authorities.

Ultimately, the perception of Marat's posthumous inspiration and justification for the Terror proved to be the primary reason for Marat's second death—the collapse of his symbol's political and cultural prominence during the reaction. The fall of Robespierre, and all that he stood for, caused a violent suppression of the Cult of Marat even though Marat's quasi-deification had made Robespierre himself insecure.[285] There was a slight layover of a few months in politics and attitudes, yet Marat was eventually linked back to the Terror and his cult destroyed in the following year. By 1795, a crowd helped to tear down the monument on the Place du Carrousel—a gothic pyramid that had been dedicated to Marat. Criers in attendance sold a pamphlet with the title of *The Crimes of Marat*, alleging Marat's secret royalist sympathies.[286] The irony could not have been lost

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[282] Jean-Paul Marat, "Marat's Funeral Oration on Honoré Riquetti Mirabeau," L'Ami du Peuple, Nos CCCCXIX.—XX.—XXI, 1791 April, in *Glimpses of the Great Jacobins*, 21.
[283] Marat, "Mirabeau," *Great Jacobins*, 15-21.
[284] Marat quoted in Ozouf, "Pantheon," *Realms of Memory* Vol III, 342.
[285] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 154.
[286] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 77.

on the participants, considering two years earlier Marat himself was the self-proclaimed "Friend of the People" publishing pamphlets about who had been a traitor and a royalist. Even some of Marat's close friends chose to destroy Marat's busts—perhaps more out of lingering horror toward the Terror and not necessarily out of their enthusiasm for the moderate political shift.[287]

Prost states that a monument's significance transcends its material proportions to demonstrate the intention of not only the erecting generation but also what happened to the monument by later generations.[288] Because not even two years had passed, we learn not about the differences between one generation and the next from the study of Marat's monuments. Instead, one discovers the political shift within the same generation between the Terror and the reaction. At a theatre as Marat's bust was busted, a crowd hissed his name[289]—the name that so many had used to glorify or sanctify their babies, battalions and provinces just a year before! Certainly the reasons for destruction are many, any list of which must include some participants seeking to prove their faith to Thermidor by destroying the symbols of the Terror. Whether the acts of destruction were sincere or merely acts of self-preservation in some cases cannot be proven, but the important issue is that Marat's symbolism was so intense both in the Terror and Thermidor that his figure was sought out and stamped out everywhere, not just by public officials but by street mobs of whom Marat had been a key leader at one time.

On January 21, 1795, a crowd immolated Marat in effigy on the yard of the Jacobin club. Perhaps out of a sense of sardonically poetic justice for the subterranean lifestyle of the clandestine writer, the crowd then reportedly dropped his effigy's ashes

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[287] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 192.
[288] Prost, "Monuments," *Realms of Memory* Vol II, 317.
[289] Bibliophile Society, "introduction" in *Polish Letters*, 77.

into the sewer. A few days later, on February 8, 1795, the government decreed to remove his real ashes from the Pantheon.[290] Radical patriotism died shortly after Robespierre, and the benevolent ghost of Marat died with it. By 1795, most citizens probably realized that radical patriotism mutated into an unhealthy ideological virus—cultivated and spread from the feverish tongue of radicals like Marat.[291]

The People's Backlash: Collective Memory Disavows Marat

> *How amusing it is to see them turn in a moment on the person who has just received their homage and tear him to pieces, despite their declarations of respect and professions of being his most obedient servants!*[292]
> —Frenchman in Marat's *Polish Letters*

The art and letters of the post-Terror era reveal that the backlash to Marat occurred at a deeper level than mere governmental shift. After the fall of Robespierre, at least three plays glorified Charlotte Corday, Marat's Girondist assassin.[293] This was a stark contrast to the days of the Terror when Marat, not Corday, was the object of cult worship. One poet, Adam Lux, also represented the shift. After publishing a poem in the year of the assassination comparing Corday to Brutus, he himself was sent to the guillotine in November.[294] Yet such an individual shift, from comparing Marat to Brutus to comparing Corday to Brutus, foreshadowed a profound collective transformation of politics and attitudes between the Terror and Thermidor. Throughout the Revolution, Voltaire's play *Brutus* had been a popular play—one which symbolized in the character of Brutus what it meant to be a patriot of good civic morals. With both Marat and

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[290] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 192.
[291] Miller, *Three Deaths*, 155, 161.
[292] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol. I, 122.
[293] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution*, 11.
[294] Schama, *Citizens*, 741.

Corday seen as committing regicide for the good of the Republic at different times, then, both were compared to Brutus as saviors *in their own time.*[295]

Adding the proverbial verbal insults to the cult's broken busts' injuries, contemporary memoirists—namely Brissot and Madame Roland—also treated Marat unkindly because they were more enemies than friends. Because of the one-sided histories, for Marat's legacy, decades of a dominant reputation as a violent monster followed the end of the Terror.[296] The reaction further silenced any indication of Marat's humanity in burning his correspondence and most of his writings.[297] One wonders if only the most violent invectives escaped the fires so as to be represented out of proportion to make Marat seem as inhumane, mad, and monstrous as possible. Following the moderate reaction, the reign of Napoleon ushered in a century of shame and silence for Montagnards. Pierre Nora states, "The empire had thrown a leaden cloak over memories of the Revolution, and had brutally censored the rare attempts to lift it."[298] In fact, with the fall of Napoleon, the number of published memoirs exploded, but none bearing sympathies to the "blood drinkers" (Montagnards) saw publication until the fading of public shame at the end of the 19th century. Instead, Girondist and Constituent Assembly memoirists wrote most of the Revolutionary accounts. In addition, similar moderate editorial trends impacted memory through the over six hundred historical novels published between 1815 and 1832.[299]

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[295] Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution,* 91-92, 88.
[296] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 192.
[297] Friedlander, "introduction" in *Writings of Marat,* 28.
[298] Nora, *Rethinking France,* 407.
[299] Nora, *Rethinking France,* 407.

Halbwachs attributes the survival of sainthood to the ability of living disciples to write the histories of the saints.[300] Marat was not afforded that luxury at any time during the Revolution or in the decades after. In addition to the monopoly of the moderate histories written in the decades after the Revolution and their systematic destruction of Marat's correspondences, a key moment for building a legacy was thwarted when Robespierre and the Jacobins halted both the publication of Marat's complete works and the continuation of his newspaper by his enragés disciples. Even prints and inscriptions depicting Marat underwent systematic destruction.[301] Marat's one-year sainthood seemed doomed beyond repair. Yet, as discussed in the epilogue, even a myth so discredited as the Cult of Marat was capable of resurrection during particular historical circumstances.

If ever a historical event lent itself naturally to interpretation by theories of social memory, the Terror of the French Revolution is it. Focusing on the legacy of Jean-Paul Marat, I believe, pushes us even closer to the crux of a perfect case study. Halbwachs argues that conceptions of the past are always a social construction of the present. If one considers how Jean-Paul Marat was viewed as a saint during the Terror and then as a monster during the reaction thereafter, the dominant groups' politics and personal stations and experiences in life certainly seemed to have played a role in how those societies felt about Marat. Halbwachs points out that individual people only remember by empathizing with the perspective of a particular group. If that is the case, one must deduce from the opinions expressed on Marat between the Terror and Thermidor that not only the government but society in general fundamentally shifted from radical to moderate. Perhaps the point is too obvious. Yet the profundity of this shift cannot be

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[300] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 111.
[301] Friedlander, "introduction" in *Writings of Marat*, 28.

considered without thinking of the details that manifest its implications. Halbwachs states that "verbal conventions" represent the "most elementary and most stable framework of collective memory."[302] Marat's name passing from its use as high praise during the Terror to its use as what amounted to a taboo word to be hissed, changed, and unspoken during the reaction shows how deeply the shift of experience had led to a shift in attitudes and politics.

Although Halbwachs points toward the force of nostalgia for people of the past as a product of their harmlessness toward the present,[303] he would likely agree that Marat's case is exceptional in three ways. The nostalgia for Marat, first of all, only lasted about a year. His person transcended death to become associated with a cult that the people soon found out was not at all harmless toward the present. Since Marat seemed to continue living in the most malevolent way, as a cold statue justifying thousands of deaths, the people disavowed their nostalgia. They engaged in mass deicide, symbolically destroying the saint they had helped to create. The only way to forget their own complicity in the Terror was to destroy the external trappings of the Terror, and that included the symbols of Marat.

A Complex Political Legacy

> *Some have seen the Divinity in a cat, others in an ox, others in a man; some have made him a compound of different animals, while others have painted him as idle and jealous. He has been misunderstood by all.*[304]
> —The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

Ultimately, Marat's claim to embody the "rage of the people" holds more truth than the assertion that he was the posthumous policymaker of the Terror.[305] While some

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[302] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40, 45.
[303] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 51.
[304] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 94.

of his ideas carried through into the Terror, the Jacobin's relationship to the Cult of Marat was that of playing a dual role between controlling the efforts of popular mobilization in Marat's name while exploiting the symbols and aura of the revolutionary saint toward their own ends. With Robespierre's fall and the reaction after Thermidor, Marat's image and ideas correspondingly fell. The symbolic act of this era ceased to be one of genuine cult-hood or even cynical control but rather one of destruction of the cult. To break with the symbols of the past such as the imposing busts of Marat was also a break with the Jacobin policies—particularly radical social welfare.

Sagan claims that even though clamoring for radical policies from the fringes, Marat was fundamentally in lockstep with the Jacobins, even holding office as president of the Jacobin Club at one time.[306] Michael Walzer fundamentally disagrees, pointing to the fact that Marat's real power stemmed from his writing and not his political activity. His lack of notable achievements or activity within the Jacobins reflects this viewpoint.[307] To justify the charge that Marat was in the mainstream, Sagan suggests that Marat never challenged the inviolability of the right to property as stated in Article 17 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.[308] Yet this is not just absurdly wrong. It proves the inadequacy of Sagan's research, symptomatic of so many historians lacking the sense of Marat's political development and philosophical nuance. Sagan is fundamentally wrong on where Marat stood in regards to property rights, because in *La Constitution ou Projet de declaration des Droits de l' home et du citoyen, suivi d' un*

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[305] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 50.
[306] Sagan, *Citizens & Cannibals*, 125. R.R. Palmer also claims Marat was a Mountain leader, along with only Danton and Robespierre as peers. It is not clear if Palmer meant to suggest that Marat had influence in general and sat with the Mountain, or if he actually considers Marat one of the inner-party leaders. R.R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*, 25.
[307] Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 158.
[308] Marat, *Constitution ou Projet,* quoted in Sagan, *Citizens & Cannibals*, 40-41.

Plan de constitution juste, sage et libre, published in August of 1789, Marat argued for social welfare and property redistribution, suggesting that the poor might take not only property by force but might even take lives if necessary.[309] If that were not enough proof, one need look no further than the motto printed at the head of every number of Marat's *Journal de la République française*: "In order that misery may be diminished, the property of the wealthy must be abolished."[310] Marat further questioned the mainstream revolutionary policies in regards to the church, suggesting that the Church's property had been the patrimony of the poor before the government confiscated it to defray its own expenses.[311] Marat's substantive causal relationship to the policies of the Terror, on a point by point basis, is just not there. He would have felt many of the economic policies did not go far enough, while his ideas on some aspects of the Church, war, and dictatorship show that Marat would have felt the Terror perhaps went too far. While Marat wanted a temporary dictatorship of the Roman model, Sagan is also wrong to assert that Marat favored a dictatorship of Robespierre.[312] Marat never doubted Robespierre's patriotism, but Marat claimed he "lacked both the views and the audacity of a statesman."[313] Marat was so often out of tune with the mainstream Jacobins during his lifetime that Desmoulins once claimed that "the Marat party...consists of Marat alone."[314]

Loomis is also wrong to assert that Marat held no capacity or inclination to engage in debate over abstract political theory.[315] As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Marat

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[309] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat*, 45-47.
[310] Friedlander, "introduction" in *Writings of Marat*, 25.
[311] Marat, "Marat to Desmoulins," 1790 June 24, *Writings of Marat*, 65.
[312] Sagan, *Citizens & Cannibals*, 293.
[313] Marat quoted in *Jean Paul Marat*, Gottschalk, 115.
[314] Desmoulins, "Gironde Foxes," *Great Jacobins*, 36.
[315] Loomis, *Paris in the Terror*, 94.

held a well-developed political program with inconsistencies no graver than other politicians of his time. Loomis might be better off to claim, as Gottschalk does, that Marat's influence never lay with his political ideas or any constructive ideology but rather with his violent invective.[316] Yet because Marat also sacrificed himself for his own idea of the Revolution, he ultimately transcended his role as a herald of radical violence and social conscience to become what one contemporary sardonically referred to as the "divinity of the populace."[317]

[316] Gottschalk, *Jean Paul Marat,* 171.
[317] Beaulie quoted in *Jean Paul Marat,* Gottschalk, 183-184.

EPILOGUE

Resurrections of Marat

Will you always make the Deity an instrument of fury, to justify your caprices and foolish opinions?[318]
—The hermit in Marat's *Polish Letters*

The ghost of Marat—alternatively a friendly spirit or devil's legionnaire—continued to ebb and flow with the tide of history. Both conservatives and liberals condemned Marat "as a monster" through the 1840s at least. But in the 1860s, Marat reclaimed some "friends" of radical republican sympathy. Then Engels lauded Marat in 1884, which made Marat a communist hero.[319] In 1936, the Popular Front of France won an electoral victory against fascism in part by reviving the old republican symbols for a celebration of Bastille Day in 1935. Among the tricolored flags a familiar face looked out at the throngs of people. Jean-Paul Marat appeared on his own banner featured prominently at the anniversary celebration. In addition, the revival of a 1902 play by Romain Rolland, *Quatorze juillet*, featured an actor playing Marat rallying the people of 1789. Yet the play really sought to inspire those in attendance in 1936 at the Alhambra theatre. At the end of the show, the characters of Marat and Desmoulins joined the cast, crew, and audience to sing along to both *La Marseillaise* and *L'Internationale.* The Popular Front victory, like all Marat-inspired victories it seems, was short-lived,

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[318] Marat, *Polish Letters* Vol II, 178.
[319] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 18-19.

however. With economic deterioration and the loss of Spain to the fascists in its Civil War of the late 1930s, the center-left Popular Front coalition of France fell apart.[320] Marat eventually regained the fame of a national hero in another country, however—this time in the Soviet Union.[321] Yet that resurrection, too, was killed and cast into the oblivion of failed historical movements. Halbwachs discusses how myths transcend the "[d]etails of time and place, no matter how concrete and animated they might have been for contemporaries" to be "translated into general characteristics" until the proverbial "Jerusalem becomes... a heavenly allegory."[322] In some radical circles, including the popular fronts of the 1930s and the Soviet Union of the twentieth century, it appears that the particulars of a diseased Marat and a starving Paris were forgotten. Instead, those movements remembered Marat and the French Revolution as their political equivalent of a heavenly Jerusalem. The Terror, for them, seemed charged with the energy of myths both hazy and euphoric. Their collective memory of the Terror depicted Marat as the exemplary agent of violent social justice.

The transfer of controversial heroes of one past land to a completely different modern day country is not without precedent, as is evident from the cult of Brutus transcending over two millennia and travelling from Rome to France during the Revolution. Another precedent was twentieth century Zionism retrieving the Battle of Masada from two thousand years of historical obscurity. In order to rally the new state of Israel to commit resources and lives to defending the borders of the bourgeoning political entity, Zionism created a state-endorsed cult of Masada, which glorified the heroic

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[320] Christian Amalvi, "Bastille Day: from *Dies Irae* to Holiday," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (Volume III: Symbols), ed., Pierre Nora, trans., Authur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 146-149.
[321] Vaughn and Weston, ed., "introduction" in *David's Marat*, 19
[322] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 102.

national sacrifices of the resistance fighters in ancient Jewish Palestine. In Masada, the Jews held off their Roman conquerors bravely before committing mass suicide to reaffirm national dignity. Barry Schwartz led a sociological study of Israel's retrieval of the national myth, and his team ultimately concluded that societies that fear they might be on the brink of collapse turn to moments from the heroic past that parallel present conditions. If societies feel existential security, the Masadas (or Marats) of the past lose their appeal because the myths are no longer necessary to sustain a desperate or paranoid nation.[323] If we are to take Schwartz's lesson and apply it to the case of Marat, it is very likely that Marat is a sort of historical boogie man. Whether or not he meant well or did well, we can ultimately conclude that whenever his example is evoked, the society resurrecting his myth feels its survival to be endangered. Nora eloquently stated that "Resort to memory is a function of the darkening of the future, along with the darkened past from which we are severed." It is "the 'acceleration' of history, the increasingly rapid disappearance of things and the move into an increasingly uncertain future."[324] Whatever the institution of the past that was "severed"—Louis XVI's head from his shoulders and so the Monarchy from France, Czarist rule in Russia, the Republic of Spain—it seems that the pattern of invocation or recreation (or resurrection) for Marat is one that will either begin or more often end with civil war, violence, and dictatorship. Let us hope that only sober analyses of Marat's life and cult are proliferated, because if he shows up again in glorified symbolic form, then uncertain times must be ahead.

Paul Friendlander, writing in the zealous moment of early twentieth century socialism, stated that "In the Hall of Fame that workers will one day dedicate to their

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[323] Lewis A. Coser, "intro" to *On Collective Memory*, Halbwachs, 32-34.
[324] Nora, *Rethinking France*, XVIII.

noblest pioneers, Marat will hold a place of honor."[325] The question is, how long did that so called Hall of Fame last? And then I suppose the next question is, how long will the next Hall of Fame last? And the next? And for better or worse, will anyone even care who the real Marat was? Or will he always be a symbol riding the tide of history, swooping in on societies like a grim reaper bearing promises to the poor with his politics of death, hated here and loved there, hated now and loved later and hated yet again? To continue Baudelaire's quote from the beginning of my thesis:

> In this work there is something at once tender and poignant; in the cold air of the room, on these cold walls, around this cold funereal bath tub, hovers a soul.[326]

Just as one can stare at David's painting and either notice the stark background of the tub and walls or the angelic expression of Marat's last breath, people seem doomed to account for Marat's legacy in extreme ways. Either he is a saint or a monster, they say. Robespierre once claimed that "history itself is a romance."[327] At least in regards to the history of the French Revolution, it seems many people—academics being no exception—rarely grow tired of finding romance in saints and monsters. Perhaps a social memory soberly accounting for the deeds of political actors is simply not possible, but one would at least expect sober analysis from historians writing the official accounts of what happened.

Of Brutus' filicidal actions in defense of the Roman Republic, Plutarch interprets with a false dichotomy of historical interpretation: upon hearing of the death of his sons, Brutus acted "either divine or brutish" in his solemn commitment to put the republic

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[325] Friedlander, "introduction" in *Writings of Marat*, 28.
[326] Baudelaire quoted in Monneret, *David and Neo-Classicism*, 111.
[327] Robespierre, "Monopoly of the Press," *Great Jacobins*, 38.

first.[328] Livy, on the other hand, suggested that Brutus' reaction was more sorrowful and humane—that underneath his republican rhetoric, he felt remorse for the loss of his sons.[329] Brutus was neither perfect nor evil, regardless of what Plutarch—here representing the arch-dichotomist—would have posterity believe. Rather, like Marat, his actions sometimes hid emotions, motivations, and a history of developments typically not accounted for in historical analyses. We should follow the sober example of Livy as historians, rather than Plutarch's superstitious dichotomist approach. Without understanding the submerged historical developments leading up to major events such as Brutus killing his sons or of the Terror, we do not really understand history. The practice of dehumanization as a shortcut to understanding historical figures is particularly disheartening today. The world faces new threats and challenges from radical ideologies, would-be dictators, and demagogues. Despite the prevalence and influence of terrorism as a buzzword in our culture, even our elected officials often fall short in understanding the cultural and psychological nuance of places that are said to "harbor terrorism." History should be the guide in asking why, not in stating presumptive answers before we truly grasp the questions. Imagining monsters and saints is easy, but is foolhardy. Disproving the myths of political saints and monsters should be the primary goal of social and biographical histories.

[328] Plutarch quoted in Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 17.
[329] Herbert, *David, Voltaire, "Brutus,"* 17.

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